



Quality Assurance Series No. 18

Assisting Local Communities: Evaluation of Government Funded NGO Projects in Vietnam

The Australian Government and NGOs have worked together for many years to support efforts to improve the social and economic situation of poor communities in developing countries around the world. This partnership recognises the skills and resources that NGOs bring to the broad community development process, and in specific sector activities such as in health, education and training.

This evaluation study of activities funded through Australian NGOs examines the quality and performance of nine NGO activities in Vietnam.

The study found that most NGO projects in Vietnam were achieving, or were likely to achieve, their objectives and outputs. All had made a positive impact on the lives of people in rural and remote areas of Vietnam. The study also found that NGOs in Vietnam were particularly effective in targeting activities at the community level and in building capacity of local organisations. The most successful projects were those managed and delivered through existing local and community structures, promoting a sense of ownership. Monitoring data collected and used by NGOs in Vietnam to report on performance was generally reliable and could be used to confirm the overall performance of NGO activities.

However, the study highlighted the need for NGOs to develop a more rigorous approach to project design, including increased attention to poverty reduction, gender and the environment. Room also exists for NGOs to improve their monitoring systems and performance reporting, and to strengthen strategies for achieving sustainable outcomes from project activities.

Quality Assurance Series
No. 18 March 2000

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The Australian Government's
Overseas Aid Program

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ISBN 0 642 42249 4

ISSN 1442 - 7176

Further information on this publication can be obtained from the Performance Information and Assessment Section, AusAID, GPO Box 887, Canberra ACT 2601. The report is available on the Internet at www.ausaid.gov.au

Designed by Spectrum Graphics www.sg.com.au

Printed by CPP Instant Printing

Cover photograph: 'Children participating in classroom activities'.

Photographed by Tim Acker.

Evaluation Responsibilities

The evaluation team consisted of:

Mr Deo Mwesigye (Team Leader)	PIA Section, AusAID
Mr Greg MacPherson (Team Member)	NGO Section, AusAID
Ms Jane Blaxland (Consultant)	Australian Consultant
Mr Dau Quoc Anh (Consultant)	Vietnamese Consultant
Ms Nguyen Thi Kim Khanh (Consultant)	Vietnamese Consultant

The team was ably assisted by Ms Myra Navarro-Mukii, Statistical Services Section, AusAID, and, in Vietnam, by Mr Nguyen Van Kien of the People's Aid Coordination Committee (PACCOM). AusAID offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City provided valuable logistical support.

The team wishes to thank NGO project staff and Government officials for their hospitality and willing cooperation in this evaluation. NGOs also organised field visits and provided transport essential for the work of evaluation.

The content of the report remains the responsibility of the evaluation team.

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ACRONYMS

ACFOA	Australian Council for Overseas Aid
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AFAP	Australian Foundation for Peoples of Asia and the Pacific
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANCP	AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program
APHEDA	Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad
AREA	Association for Research and Environmental Aid Ltd
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BCC	Behaviour Change Communication
CDC	Committee for Development Cooperation
CPC	Commune Project Committee
CRES	Centre for Natural Resource Management and Environmental Studies
CSW	Commercial Sex Worker
DOE	Department of Education
DHF	Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever
EED	Enfants et Developpement
GAD	Gender and Development
GOV	Government of Vietnam
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
IDU	Injecting Drug User
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KRA	Key Result Area
MBE	Multigrade and Bilingual Education
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
NAC	National AIDS Committee
NGO	Non-Government Organisation

NGOPI	NGO Package of Information
NIHE	National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology
NOVA	NGO: Vietnam-Australia Scheme
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PAC	Provincial AIDS Committee
PACCOM	People's Aid Coordination Committee
PCC	Project Coordination Committee
PIA	Performance Information and Assessment Section, AusAID
PLA	Participative Learning and Action
PLWA	People Living With AIDS
PMB	Project Management Board
PMC	Preventative Medical Centre
SCA	Save the Children Australia
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Trainers of Trainers
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UN	United Nations
VGCL	Vietnam General Confederation of Labour
VND	Vietnamese Dong (currency)
WID	Women in Development
WU	Women's' Union
WVA	World Vision Australia

CURRENCY

At the time of the evaluation, Australian one dollar was equal to about 8500 VND.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aim of the evaluation

AusAID is conducting a program of evaluations of activities funded through Australian NGOs. The first of these evaluations focuses on projects in Vietnam. The aim of the evaluation is to contribute to the development of a practical and realistic mechanism for assessing NGO program performance and to assess the impact and sustainability of NGO development activities. NGO program evaluations are an element of AusAID's NGO accreditation risk management cycle, which also includes accreditation reviews, audits and spotchecks. Through these evaluations, AusAID can check the accuracy of monitoring information and self-assessments provided by NGOs in their activity reports to support assessments of NGO program performance. Evaluations can assist AusAID and NGOs to improve activity design, monitoring and evaluation systems and the impact of development activities. Evaluations also enable AusAID to better understand how Australian government funding through NGOs contributes to development in different countries and regions, and how the impact of activities can be improved.

Summary of main findings

Achievements

The evaluation found that most NGO projects were achieving, or are likely to achieve, their stated objectives and outputs. Overall, the level of achievement of these objectives was close to fully satisfactory. All projects had made some positive impact on the lives of the intended beneficiaries. While the observed impacts of most projects tended to be localised in keeping with project size and level of funding, in some cases benefits had spread to non-project areas without project support.

Most projects appeared to be gathering appropriate monitoring data to allow judgements about activity performance, although room exists for improving performance monitoring and reporting systems. Monitoring systems were assessed as adequate for collecting activity performance information, and could therefore be used as a basis for analysing self-assessment information to assess overall NGO scheme performance. Where beneficiaries actively participated in monitoring processes, the quality of the monitoring information was enhanced. Feedback during project implementation from local project staff and the opportunity for beneficiaries to influence appropriate revisions to project activities contributed to the quality of monitoring information in projects.

Community participation and support were important elements in the success of many projects. In Vietnam, where local organisations have an important role in community activities, the involvement of local organisations in community mobilisation encouraged beneficiaries' participation in project activities, and promoted a sense of local ownership of project activities and outcomes.

There is a high degree of administrative oversight inherent in the GOV system. It was observed that the more successful projects tended to be those that were managed and delivered through established local or community structures or line agencies at the provincial, district or commune levels. Working with these structures provided for better participation by local partners and beneficiaries in project design, implementation and monitoring. Moreover, activities that built on government programs, such as the National Dengue Program and the National Education Program, were more likely to succeed and to be sustainable.

The study found that Australian NGOs were making a positive contribution to the development effort in Vietnam:

- they were particularly effective in targeting activities at the community level and in building the capacity of local organisations;
- they often focused on the most disadvantaged groups, including those in rural, remote and mountainous areas, and were able to bring benefits to the poor;
- some developed and piloted innovative projects, with the potential for replication and expansion into other areas; and
- they are well placed to build Australia-Vietnam links at the community level.

Scope for improvement

The evaluation highlighted a number of areas in which NGOs can improve performance:

- there is room for improvement in designing projects, particularly in defining objectives, outputs and performance indicators. Improvements can also be made in NGO monitoring systems and reporting;
- few NGOs had poverty alleviation as an explicit objective in project design, although it was often said by project staff to be an implicit objective in project implementation. The limited treatment of poverty alleviation in designs, and also of gender and environment, is a contributing factor to the low performance of projects in these areas;
- sustainability of project outcomes was an area of weakness;
- coordination could be improved through better information sharing among NGOs and through use of available resources and information centres in Vietnam; and
- Australian identity could be better demonstrated in NGO projects.

Key lessons

The following key lessons emerged from the evaluation:

- A good project design is important to project success. The definition of simple and achievable objectives, outputs and performance indicators contributes to reliable monitoring of project performance and implementation of activities. It also gives AusAID a clear understanding of what is being funded. Appropriate attention to poverty alleviation, gender and environment in project design and implementation is likely to lead to effective development impacts.
- In Vietnam, it is necessary to work with existing local or community structures at different levels. There are many community groups to work with and NGOs need their support to ensure that project initiatives meet community needs, and in mobilising beneficiaries' participation in project activities. In Vietnam, the inclusion of local structures and community groups in project activities promotes a sense of local ownership of project activities and outcomes and enhances the chances of project sustainability.
- In Vietnam, NGO projects should facilitate self-reliance of beneficiaries and local organisations through capacity building. Training programs should be designed to ensure continuation of project-initiated activities with reduced resources after phase-out.
- NGOs sometimes do innovative projects that require continued funding to support follow-up activities. While financial sustainability is a difficult issue to address, opportunities for further funding might be built into project design. For example, a project could include income-generation activities in its design to enable beneficiaries to make some financial contribution. Projects could also try and secure financial commitment from counterpart agencies in Vietnam at the beginning of a project.

PART A

EVALUATION REPORT FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Likely Achievement of Objectives
- Chapter 3. Assessing the Impact and Sustainability of NGO Projects
- Chapter 4. Gender and Development in NGO Projects in Vietnam
- Chapter 5. Performance Information and Reporting
- Chapter 6. The Role of Australian NGOs in Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives of the evaluation

AusAID is conducting a program of evaluations of activities funded through Australian NGOs. This is the first of these evaluations and focuses on activities in Vietnam.

The aim of the evaluation is to contribute to the development of a practical and realistic mechanism for assessing NGO program performance and to begin to assess development impact and sustainability of NGO activities. Lessons drawn from project experience can be used to improve the performance of future projects, including the quality of performance information reported by NGOs, and of the schemes through which NGOs are funded.

In 1996, AusAID began implementing a package of managerial reforms for NGO funding in response to recommendations from an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO 1996) audit of the management of AusAID's NGO programs. The reforms included accreditation of Australian NGOs for aid program funding, generic guidelines for NGO schemes, standard project documentation and monitoring reports, and the development of performance indicators to assess scheme performance.

A follow-up audit of NGO funding (ANAO 1998) had some concerns about the quality of the performance information being reported by NGOs. The ANAO recommended that:

- AusAID work with NGOs to improve the standard of performance information available to the NGO scheme, sufficient to assess achievements against individual activities; and
- develop performance measures, aggregating activity level information as appropriate, sufficient to assess overall NGO scheme performance and the efficiency of AusAID administration.

Preliminary investigation of the systems used by NGOs to provide performance information will assist AusAID to work with NGOs to address concerns of the ANAO about the quality of the performance information reported by NGOs.

The objectives of the evaluation are set out in the Terms of Reference (TOR) (Appendix 10). More broadly, the evaluation set out to:

- assess the effectiveness of AusAID-funded NGO projects in achieving their stated objectives and the sustainability of outcomes;
- contribute to AusAID's understanding of the systems NGOs use to obtain and compile reliable performance information in monitoring reports; and
- comment on program delivery aspects and roles of Australian NGOs in Vietnam.

The TOR provide that emphasis in reporting will be on lessons learned and how NGOs can better assess and report on project performance.

1.2 Methods and approaches to the evaluation

1.2.1 Country selection

As this evaluation is the first in a program of evaluations of NGO activities, AusAID decided to undertake it in Asia to reflect the high level of AusAID funding for NGO activities in this region. In the four years to 1997-98, AusAID provided \$285 million through NGO schemes (AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), NGO Windows and Humanitarian Relief programs). Of this funding, approximately \$109 million or 38 per cent supported projects in the Asian region (Table 1.1). Funding for NGO activities in this region is likely to increase as a result of the economic and social problems created by the Asian economic crisis.

TABLE 1.1: ANCP, NGO WINDOWS AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FUNDING BY REGION (1994-95 TO 1997-98)

Region	Total value (\$A million)	Per cent by value
Asia	108.7	38.1
Africa	107.9	37.8
Oceania	41.9	14.7
Middle East	11.4	4.0
Central/South America	2.0	0.7
Other	13.4	4.7

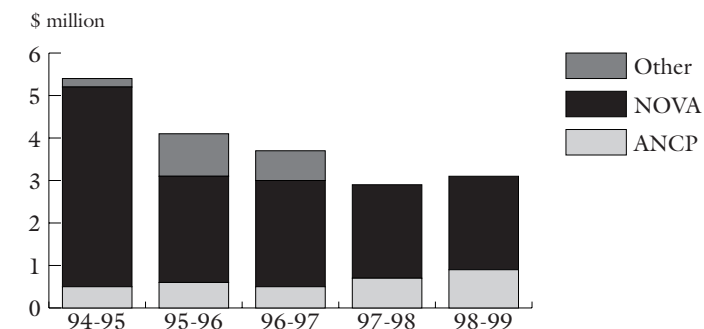
Source: Various ANCP annual reports.

Vietnam was chosen as the case study country for this evaluation for several reasons:

- AusAID has funded NGO projects in Vietnam since the NGO:Vietnam/Australia Program (NOVA) began in 1992. Between 1994-95 and 1998-99, AusAID assistance to Vietnam through Australian NGOs totalled about \$20 million (Figure 1.1). There is potential for NGO activities to increase following the Asian economic crisis. Thus, lessons learned from project experience may be useful to improve the performance of future projects in Vietnam and the region more generally.
- The current AusAID procedures for funding NGO programs are based on generic NGO guidelines introduced in early 1997. The new guidelines for NOVA are based on the generic guidelines (Box 1.1). NOVA was the first country window to trial the new NGO scheme guidelines. The evaluation provides a preliminary assessment of the way projects are being implemented under the guidelines.

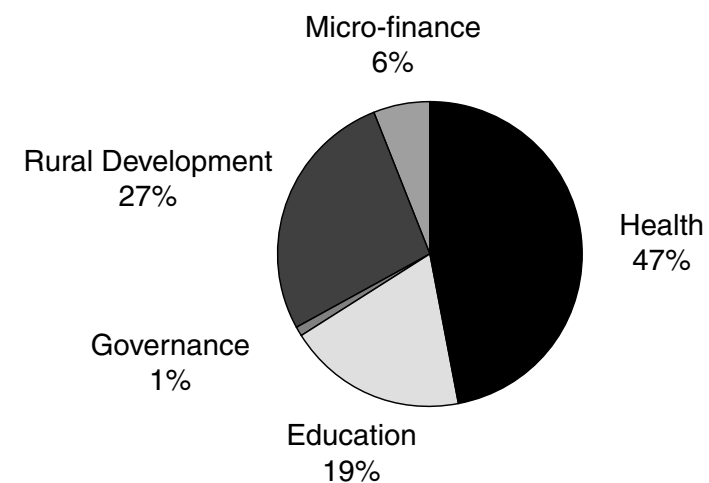
- Vietnam offers a representative spread of Australian NGOs involved in development projects covering a wide cross-section of completed and ongoing projects in AusAID's Key Result Areas (KRAs) (Figure 1.2). For example, between 1994-95 and 1998-99, approximately two-thirds of NOVA funding supported projects in the social sectors, mainly in health and education. Rural development projects accounted for about one-third of total NOVA expenditure.

Figure 1.1: AusAID funding of NGO projects in Vietnam



Source: Various ANCP annual reports.

Figure 1.2: NGO Projects by sector



Source: Various ANCP annual reports.

Box 1.1: Current NOVA guidelines

Objectives: The overall goal of NOVA is to alleviate poverty and promote sustainable economic and social development among poorer rural and urban communities by encouraging the development of links between the people of Australia and of Vietnam.

Activities: Priority areas are expected to be:

- basic education and training - including literacy, primary, and non-formal education;
- primary health care - including nutrition, health education, environmental health, drug awareness, communicable and non-communicable diseases programs including HIV/AIDS, women's and children's health including family planning, and prevention and treatment of blindness;
- water supply and sanitation - including maintenance of water quality;
- income generation - including microfinance, microenterprise development, and small business development;
- rural and other poor - including the development of agriculture and basic services and capacity building of community organisations;
- disadvantaged groups particularly women and children - including assistance to prevent violence against women and children, child labour, and the situation of minorities and marginalised groups;
- strengthening the organisational, planning, management and accountability capacities of local NGOs;
- management of the environment and natural resources on a sustainable basis - including soils, water, fisheries, habitat and forests; and
- renewable energy and appropriate technology.

Criteria: Proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- be sustainable by the end of the activity;
- where possible, use existing community structures, be implemented by local or Australian NGOs acceptable to the national or local authorities of the country in which the activities are planned and be consistent with the country's development policies;
- encourage and facilitate community self help and self reliance through local participation in defining goals, formulating development strategies and contributing to costs (including contributions in kind), and in the implementation and management of such activities;
- ensure that the specific social and economic needs of both men and women are addressed and that opportunities for women to participate as decision

makers in determining objectives and types of activities are increased;

- provide good value for money;
- strengthen counterpart organisations in developing countries so as to enable them to sustain activities after Australian assistance has ceased;
- benefit groups selected on the basis of need - not on religious, sectarian or political bases;
- encourage sound environmental and ecological practices; and
- encourage good governance and respect for human rights.

Support will not be provided for activities which:

- subsidise evangelism or missionary outreach, or similar activities by political organisations;
- involve welfare activities; are for emergency relief activities; are for development education;
- are for recurrent costs - unless there is a convincing plan to ensure the recipients will be able to take over those recurrent costs within the life of the activity;
- are currently funded under other Australian Government programs - NGOs seeking AusAID funds must declare all other proposals or sources of Australian Government funding which may impact on the activity;
- involve retrospective funding;
- do not comply with AusAID's guiding principles for Australia's assistance for population and family planning activities, or those for which any response to the population checklist accompanying those guidelines is 'NO'; and
- are focused primarily on the provision of equipment, freight or buildings.

1.2.2 Project selection

AusAID funds between 30 to 45 discrete NGO projects a year in Vietnam. In 1997-98, AusAID funded about 40 NGO projects with a total AusAID contribution of about \$3 million. For cost-effectiveness reasons and the timeframe available for the overall evaluation, it was decided to choose a sample of projects from all projects funded since the early 1990s.

Nine projects were selected from the database for detailed field assessment in consultation with the AusAID's NGO Section, Vietnam Desk and AusAID Posts in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Table 1.2). A number of considerations underpinned the selection of the

project sample. The sample was to:

- be representative of Australian NGOs implementing projects in Vietnam (both small and large NGOs);
- reflect the size and sectoral spread of AusAID-funded NGO activities;
- include some completed and some ongoing projects;
- include some projects funded through both the ANCP and NOVA programs; and
- include a mix of projects implemented in the north, central and south of Vietnam to reflect their geographical dispersion.

By using several criteria, it was possible to ensure that the sample was reasonably distributed and roughly representative.

TABLE 1.2: SELECTED PROJECTS FOR EVALUATION

NGO	Project	Sector	Duration	AUSAID (A\$)	Region
WVA	Da Nang AIDS Education and Awareness	Health	3/96-9/98	\$226,000	Central
WVA	Highway One - Developing Community Responses to HIV/AIDS	Health	7/97-6/00	\$304,000	Central
CARE Australia	Assertiveness Training Skills for Women for Protection from HIV AIDS	Health	1/96-6/99	\$271,000	South
AFAP	Community Programs Dengue Surveillance and Control	Health	1/95-12/99	\$600,000	North
AREA	Integrated Community Development for the Environs of Ba Vi National Park	Rural Devt: (Envt/Comm Devt)	4/94-3/99	\$1.1 million	North
ADRA	Cow Banks Phase I	Rural Devt.	8/96-6/97	\$52,000	North
APHEDA	Workplace Training	Ed/Training	3/94-2/96	\$325,000	Hanoi
SCA	Binh Thuan Basic Education and Teacher Training Phase I	Ed/Training	4/95-3/98	\$826,390	South
UNICEF Australia	Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities and other Disadvantaged Children (ANCP component)	Ed/Training	1995-1998	\$331,000	Mainly North

1.2.3 Evaluation methodology

The approach adopted in this evaluation comprised two distinct parts. An initial desk study was undertaken to compile a database of AusAID supported NGO projects in Vietnam, from which the sample of 9 projects was selected for rapid field evaluation. The Team then reviewed all the relevant project documents and prepared an issues paper that formed the basis for the field study. The issues paper included:

- a list of the issues to be examined during the field work;
- a brief description of each project's objectives, outputs (and their quantifiable indicators), implementation issues and funding; and
- assessment methods to be used to achieve the objectives of the evaluation (such as questionnaires and interview schedules).

An advisory group was formed to assist the evaluation (Appendix 10) and provide advice on the evaluation, including methods used and projects selected for field visits.

Field visits to individual project sites were undertaken from mid-April to mid-May 1999. Prior to the fieldwork, separate meetings were held with representatives of the People's Aid Coordination Committee (PACCOM) and the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) in Vietnam. These agencies were also debriefed after the completion of the field visits.

Two to three days were spent with each project where discussions were held with project staff, Provincial, District and Commune officials, Peoples' Committees, mass organisations (such as the Women's Union and Youth Union) and Trade Union officials. Semi-structured and informal interviews were held with beneficiaries and participants in project activities. In order to gain a broader overview, transects or group walks were undertaken in project areas. The Team split into four groups during site visits to maximise the number of households visited. In a number of projects, the Team also visited non-project sites to gain the views of non-beneficiaries in relation to project activities.

The field evaluation of each project ended with the writing up of the project assessment. Time constraints did not permit systematic discussions with, or feedback from, NGOs about the Team's findings following project visits. However, NGOs were given the opportunity to comment on the draft evaluation report, and their comments were considered in the final report.

The Evaluation Team comprised two AusAID staff, one Australian consultant with NGO experience, two Vietnamese consultants with experience of the work of NGOs in Vietnam and a representative of PACCOM. One Vietnamese consultant covered projects in the north of Vietnam and the other covered projects in the central and south of Vietnam.

The evaluation process was constrained by several factors, including the limited time spent on each project visited, hence, the limited number of project sites visited. Some of the sites may not have been representative of the entire project area. Nevertheless, the rapid field evaluation approach was the cost-effective way of obtaining information on the

reliability of NGOs' monitoring data, and a broad indication of the success or otherwise of AusAID-supported NGO projects. This information contributes to the overall assessment of the performance of NGO schemes.

1.3 Report structure

The report contains two parts (A and B). Part A is the main report and discusses the main evaluation findings and lessons. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reports on aggregate-level findings about the likely achievement of projects' objectives. It also discusses the key factors influencing the likely achievement of objectives. Chapter 3 assesses some of the main impacts of NGO projects and the likely sustainability of project outcomes. The extent to which NGOs have incorporated women in development (WID) and/or gender and development (GAD) issues in their projects is examined in Chapter 4. A preliminary examination of the capacity of NGOs to monitor and report on performance is undertaken in Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 looks at the role Australian NGOs are playing in Vietnam.

Part B of the report contains summaries of individual project assessments and other background information, the TOR, and the assessment form used to rate project performance.

2. LIKELY ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

The overall performance of each project and of each component was assessed using a five level rating system ranging from 5 (Best Practice) to 1 (Weak) (Box 2.1). These scores correspond to the AusAID's scoring used in Activity Monitoring Briefs for most bilateral activities, and NGO Monitoring Briefs for NGO activities. The rating for each project is an indicative assessment of project performance at the time of the evaluation. In addition to the likely achievement of objectives and appropriateness of objectives and design, ratings were assigned to project performance in relation to participatory methods, poverty alleviation, gender, project management, sustainability and performance monitoring and reporting. These design criteria are likely to provide insights into the reasons for the variation in the performance of projects in achieving their objectives. With the move to accrual budgeting and outcome based reporting, this rating system can provide AusAID with the capacity to assess and report on the quality of NGO schemes.

Each Team member rated projects using a standard 'assessment form' (see Appendix 11). This form is based on the Project Quality Standards included in AusGUIDE. The form enumerates 4 quality attributes, 11 indicators of these, and 28 specific quality standards linked to indicators. Individual Team member scores were aggregated and averaged to arrive at the reported scores for each indicator of performance.

Box 2.1: Performance scoring

Projects were assessed using the following scale:

- 5: Best Practice
- 4: Fully Satisfactory
- 3: Satisfactory Overall
- 2: Marginally Satisfactory
- 1: Weak

2.2 Overall assessment of performance

The results of the evaluation found the majority of NGO projects were achieving, or likely to achieve, their objectives and outputs as per the design submitted to AusAID (Table 2.1). Overall, the level of achievement was close to fully satisfactory. While time constraints and lack of adequate baseline and monitoring data hampered quantitative assessments of projects, this does not detract from the positive qualitative assessments reached.

Of the nine AusAID-funded NGO projects evaluated, five were judged as fully satisfactory or better in terms of achieving, or likely achievement of, their stated objectives. Of these, one project was rated as best practice. Three projects had a satisfactory overall rating while only one project was judged as marginally satisfactory in achieving its stated objectives. The ‘marginally satisfactory’ and ‘weak’ categories indicate projects that are unlikely in their present form to have successful outcomes.

TABLE 2.1: SUMMARY OF OVERALL PROJECT PERFORMANCE, 9 PROJECTS

Indicator	Projects				
	Weak	Marginally satisfactory	Satisfactory overall	Fully satisfactory	Best practice
Appropriateness of objectives		AREA	UNICEF, CARE WVA-HW1	APHEDA, SCA ADRA, WVA-DN	AFAP
Participatory methods		AREA	UNICEF, ADRA WVA-HW1, WVA-DN	AFAP, SCA CARE	APHEDA
Achievement of objectives		AREA	ADRA, WVA-HW1 WVA-DN	APHEDA, CARE SCA, UNICEF	AFAP
Extent of benefits to those targeted		AREA	WVA-HW1, WVA-DN	APHEDA, SCA UNICEF, CARE ADRA	AFAP
Poverty alleviation		APHEDA AREA	CARE, WVA-HW1 WVA-DN	AFAP, ADRA SCA, UNICEF	
WID/GAD		ADRA AREA	WVA-DN, SCA UNICEF	AFAP, APHEDA CARE, WVA-HW1	
Project management		AREA	ADRA, WVA-HW1 WVA-DN	SCA, UNICEF CARE	AFAP APHEDA
Sustainability strategy		AREA	UNICEF, CARE SCA, WVA-HW1 WVA-DN	APHEDA, AFAP ADRA	
Sustainability of benefits		AREA	UNICEF, WVA-DN WVA-HW1, ADRA	AFAP, APHEDA CARE, SCA	
Institutional sustainability		AREA	WVA-HW1, ADRA WVA-DN, SCA	APHEDA UNICEF CARE	AFAP
Performance monitoring and reporting		AREA	SCA, UNICEF WVA-HW1, ADRA WVA-DN, CARE	APHEDA	AFAP

This overall assessment is consistent with the findings of several other evaluations of NGO activities (see for example, Riddell and Robinson 1992, Kershaw et al 1995, Riddell et al 1995 and Riddell et al 1997). In some of these studies, over 90 per cent of projects evaluated were judged as successful in achieving their objectives and in most the figure was well above 80 per cent.

Notwithstanding this positive assessment of Australian NGOs in achieving their design objectives and outputs in Vietnam, there are areas in which improvements can be made. Overall project performance when broader issues of participatory methods, gender, project management, sustainability and performance monitoring and reporting were included, was variable (Table 2.1). For example, the sustainability of project initiatives, and performance monitoring and reporting were areas that could be improved.

Correlation analysis was conducted between a number of quality attributes and performance ratings (Box 2.2). The results indicate that projects that are managed or delivered through existing local structures, have clear and realistic objectives that reflect beneficiaries’ needs, are implemented in a participatory fashion, and have clear monitoring systems, best achieve their objectives (see below).

Box 2.2: Measure of Association or Correlation

As the number of projects assessed is nine, Spearman’s rho is used in computing intercorrelation between the achievement objectives and a number of quality attributes. Spearman’s rho is a descriptive statistic that measures the relationship between ranked data. This is recommended for a small sample that results in each observation being scored uniquely. This involves ranked data in which each rating is assigned a number from 1 to n (the sample size), which reflects its standing relative to other ratings. The two sets of ratings are compared using the formula for Spearman’s rho (rs):

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum D_i^2}{(n)(n-1)}$$

where:

Di = The difference of ranks

The results of the analysis are as follows:

Correlation analysis	Spearman’s rho
Achievement of objectives and project management	0.89
Achievement of objectives and appropriateness of objectives	0.76
Achievement of objectives and participatory methods	0.73
Achievement of objectives and monitoring systems and reporting	0.73

Strong correlation between the quality indicators is indicated by a coefficient higher than 0.67 at 95 per cent confidence level.

These correlations should be taken as indicative rather than definitive, as the data set is relatively small. They are noted here for the perspective they add to the possible interpretation of the evaluation findings.

2.3 Factors influencing performance

2.3.1 Project design

TABLE 2.2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - APPROPRIATENESS OF OBJECTIVES/DESIGN

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Best practice
APHEDA Workplace Training	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
ADRA Cow Banks	Fully satisfactory
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
CARE Assertiveness Training	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

In general, projects achieving their objectives were well designed with realistic and achievable objectives¹. Five projects were rated as fully satisfactory or better in this regard (Table 2.2). Their designs had fairly clear objectives and activities that might reasonably have been expected to lead to achievement of their output targets. That said, it was felt that there was room for improvement in designing some of the project components. Three projects were judged as satisfactory overall. These had some loosely defined or over ambitious objectives. In these cases, the Team had to clarify with project staff what the project had set out to achieve. The project rated as marginally satisfactory was constrained by an overambitious design and broad-ranging objectives with multiple components. It was evident in this project that objectives could not be achieved in the specified project duration.

In some cases, it was felt that monitoring systems needed to be strengthened if the benefits of experience were to be applied to new projects (see chapter 5). Notably, poor definition of performance indicators detracted from the ability of project objectives to be achieved according to project design. Poor design of objectives and performance indicators is likely to be a contributing factor to the lack of success of some project activities.

Several NGO staff interviewed alluded to a number of factors that appear to contribute to the weakness in design of some NGO projects. Some noted that there is not yet sufficient common understanding among project staff of what constitutes project goals, objectives, outputs, activities and performance indicators. They saw merit in AusAID

¹ Quality standards covered by this indicator included: measurable, clear and realistic objectives; intended outputs clearly described and appropriate; beneficiaries needs reflected in objectives; objectives consistent with the country's development policies; and objectives take account of other activities including ongoing activities of AusAID, other donors and partner country.

clarifying these aspects in the planned NGO Package of Information revision. Some NGO staff commented that not enough time or attention is given to the preparation of some project designs and that critical design steps such as logframes are often overlooked, contributing to vagueness of many objectives.

AusAID has developed AusGUIDE to provide guidance on specific development issues to those responsible for project preparation and implementation, including NGOs. It contains, among other things, examples of good project goals, objectives, outputs and performance indicators (see AusAID 1999). Box 2.3 provides definitions and examples of measures for different types of interventions.

The Team is also aware of the training that ACFOA provides to NGO staff to improve their skills in the project preparation process. NGOs should do more to ensure that their staff and local counterparts receive adequate training required for good project designs.

Box 2.3: Definitions and examples of measures for different types of interventions

Goal: The broader national or sectoral development impact to which the project contributes. The goal describes the expected impact of the project; it is a statement of intention.

Purpose: The development outcome expected at the end of the project. Examples include increased agricultural production, higher immunisation coverage and cleaner water.

Component objectives: Where the development project is large and has a number of components, each component may be given an objective statement. The objective statement specifies the outcome of each project component, achieved as the result of delivering specific outputs.

Activities: The tasks carried out to implement the project and deliver the identified outputs.

Output is a measure of the effort expended in a development project. It refers to the direct quantifiable results (goods and services) of the project.

Outcome is a measure of the effectiveness of the project.

Impact is a measure of the change achieved in relation to the original problem identified in the development project.

Differentiating outputs, outcomes and impact

The differences between these measures are illustrated in the following examples (see Fowler 1997):

	Water Supply	Credit for women	Environment
Problem	Poor health	Women's vulnerability	Fall in agricultural production
Objective	Providing community managed potable water supplies	Implement a credit program for women	Introduce agro-forestry species and technologies
Output	Number of wells installed	Number of loans given and repaid as agreed	Number of species planted correctly and surviving
Outcome	Sustained availability of clean water with proper domestic use	Increase in disposable female income	Soil fertility stabilised and new agricultural practices applied
Impact	Reduction in mortality and morbidity	Improved control, choice and status with respect to men	Retention or increase in agricultural productivity

2.3.2 Working within existing local structures

The evaluation found that projects, which were more likely to succeed, were those managed or delivered through established local structures². Of the nine projects evaluated, five were judged as fully satisfactory or better in working within local structures while three were rated as satisfactory overall (Table 2.3).

In Vietnam, it is a requirement for foreign NGOs to work with existing local or community structures or line agencies at the province, district or commune levels, or a combination. Indeed, AusAID's funding guidelines require NGOs to use these structures where possible. Typically, the NGO sets up a project management board (PMB), which may be based on an existing Government agency such as Preventative Medicine Centre (PMC), District Education Board or a mass organisation such as the Women's Union. Project activities are then agreed with or through the PMB. The PMBs may form project management committees at different levels and work with local administrative organisations during project implementation. In addition to overall project coordination

² In this report local structures are defined as government administrative structures at the provincial, district or commune levels, government/local government departments or community organisations such as the Women's Union and Youth Union, through which activities are implemented.

TABLE 2.3: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Best practice
APHEDA Workplace Training	Best practice
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
ADRA Cow Banks	Fully satisfactory
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
CARE Assertiveness Training	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

and monitoring, the NGO provides technical and financial support to the project. The evaluation found that NGOs with successful projects had good working relationships with PMBs.

The Government of Vietnam (GOV) encourages NGOs to work with local agencies to help build the capacity of these agencies. For several projects (such as the AFAP, APHEDA, UNICEF and SCA projects) the institutional arrangements put in place during project implementation have resulted in significant strengthening of the relevant implementing partner agencies. Project training activities (including study tour) have contributed to developing the skills and capacity of national, provincial and local staff thus improving the chances of project sustainability.

The evaluation found that in Vietnam, local acceptance and cooperation with project activities might be reduced where local organisations or administrative structures are bypassed in the delivery of project activities.

Projects that built on government programs (as was the case with working with the National AIDS Strategy, the National Dengue Program and the National Education Program) appeared to have an increased likelihood of expansion and sustainability. Working with organisations implementing national programs provides a better context for situating project activities and getting access to local expertise. The projects may also benefit from the financial commitment made to the program by GOV. For example, the AFAP project benefited from the provision of funds from the National Dengue Program for scaling up initiatives supported by the project to other communes (Appendix 2). The UNICEF project benefited from the GOV policy initiative of providing multigrade teachers in remote and mountainous areas with increased salaries of up to 75 per cent. This has contributed to the retention of teachers in those areas (Appendix 7). However,

where a project links in with the national program, it is essential to identify discrete components/activities in which the project operates so that its contribution can be assessed more clearly.

2.3.3 Participation of beneficiaries

TABLE 2.4: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - PARTICIPATORY METHODS³

Project	Rating
APHEDA Workplace Training	Best practice
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
CARE Assertiveness Training	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
ADRA Cow Banks	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

Considerable effort had been made in most projects to involve beneficiaries in project activities. Indeed, the evaluation found a strong link between both project success and likely sustainability and the participation of beneficiaries⁴. Eight of the nine projects evaluated were rated as satisfactory overall or better in terms of participation of beneficiaries (Table 2.4).

Overall results conceal variation in the extent of participation within projects. For example, it was found that participation of beneficiaries in some projects was higher during project implementation than at the design stage. In many cases, this is a result of the way Vietnam approaches participation. In most cases, community participation means that communities are represented by their local party members usually via mass organisations and local administrative officials. The input of beneficiaries is usually during the implementation of projects.

That said, there were some projects (eg APHEDA, WVA and CARE projects) where participation appeared to have been effective in terms of beneficiaries' involvement in research during project planning and design. Numerous and varied IEC materials developed, piloted and distributed by these projects through participatory methods were

³ Quality standards covered by this indicator included: use of participatory planning approaches; local partner officials and staff appropriately involved in project design; and ultimate beneficiaries contributed to the development of the design and project implementation.

⁴ Participation is defined here as the process by which beneficiaries are involved in setting the direction and implementation of a project with a view of improving their well being.

deemed by beneficiaries to be very relevant and appropriate. Beneficiaries interviewed commented that participation in project planning and design enhanced their sense of 'ownership' of project activities. Such ownership was evident in people's enthusiasm about the activities resulting from project interventions.

Two projects (AFAP and SCA projects) are examples where participation of beneficiaries was predominantly during the implementation stage. In the case of the AFAP project the lower level of beneficiary participation in design does not appear to have adversely impacted on project outcomes. As noted in Appendix 2, once the feasibility of the project had been established, the commune leaders mobilised the community to undertake project activities. Community participation was key to the outstanding success of this project in reducing mosquito larva numbers. Conversely, the low level of participation in some activities of Phase I of the SCA project had apparently created some difficulties in training teachers at the Teacher Training Institute and in the implementation of child-centred active teaching methodology in the classroom. Many of the concerns were noted during project implementation and led to ongoing variation in the design. Phase II of the project has addressed many aspects of the project identified as problematic in the earlier phase (Appendix 6).

2.4 Findings and lessons

- The majority of projects were achieving their objectives. Most components of these projects were generally well designed. However, there is room for improvement in designing projects and in strengthening monitoring and reporting systems to improve future project performance. Logical project design, with simple and measurable objectives contributes to effective project implementation and monitoring, and to the eventual success of the project in achieving its design objectives. Unrealistic goals and broad-ranging objectives, with multiple components, create significant difficulties for project implementation, and can be beyond the capacity of the project to effect. Project objectives need to be defined in such a way that performance targets and indicators can be easily established. This can encourage regular data collection and monitoring of progress against project objectives.
- In Vietnam, the working environment is characterised by a high degree of administrative oversight. Successful projects tended to be those that were managed and delivered through established local structures. Working within existing local and community structures at different levels provides for better participation by local partners and beneficiaries in project design and implementation. Activities that build on government programs such as the National AIDS Strategy, the National Dengue Program and the National Education Program are more likely to be successful and sustainable after project completion.

- Community participation was an important element in project success, particularly in Vietnam where local organisations have an important role in community activities. Participatory approaches (inclusive of both women and men) to project design, implementation and monitoring are essential to ensure appropriate and relevant project activities as well as to promote a sense of local ownership of project activities.

3. ASSESSING THE IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY OF NGO PROJECTS

3.1 Introduction

Under the generic guidelines NGOs are required to report on achievement of outputs. Based on the performance indicators of outputs, NGOs can then report on the likely achievement of project objectives. The underlying assumption is that achievement of objectives is likely to lead to the project having substantive development impact on the beneficiaries. This evaluation sought to move beyond achievement of objectives to assess the impact of NGO activities more broadly in order to judge how the lives of beneficiaries had been helped.

The assessment of project impacts is complicated by a number of factors that are commonly encountered by most NGO evaluations. By their nature, some projects such as HIV/AIDS interventions take a long time for impact to be felt. In some cases, it is difficult to disentangle the contribution of project and non-project factors to the outcome achieved. The Team found that there was a lack of appropriate gender sensitive baseline data upon which to assess project impact more adequately. It used a variety of methods (including visual inspection, interviews with beneficiaries and project staff and visits to non-project sites) to try to assess impact. Given the limitations on the data, the detailed impact assessment that follows is more qualitative than quantitative in nature.

3.2 Project impact

TABLE 3.1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - PROJECT IMPACT⁵

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Best practice
APHEDA Workplace Training	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Fully satisfactory
CARE Assertiveness Training	Fully satisfactory
ADRA Cow Banks	Fully satisfactory
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

In broad terms, field observation and discussions with beneficiaries suggest that all projects evaluated had made at least some positive impact on the lives of the intended

⁵ Quality standards covered by this indicator included: the project has made (is likely to make) a positive impact on the lives of beneficiaries; and beneficiaries are likely or able to describe the benefits received.

beneficiaries. The extent of the benefits received varied between projects. Six of the nine projects evaluated were assessed as having fully satisfactory or better impact, including one project that was assessed as having best practice impact. In all of these cases, beneficiaries were clearly able to describe and demonstrate the benefits received that are attributable to the projects. Two projects were assessed as having a satisfactory overall impact while one project was rated as having a marginally satisfactory impact on those assisted (Table 3.1).

A general pattern that emerged from the assessment was that successful projects were having significantly more social impacts than economic impacts on lives of beneficiaries targeted. In a large measure, this reflects the fact that seven of the nine projects evaluated were in the health and education sectors, a further reflection of the fact that NGOs have concentrated their activities in social rather than income-generation projects.

The impacts of most projects tended to be localised in keeping with the size of project activities. In a few cases project benefits spread to non-project areas without project support (see below).

3.2.1 Impact on family income

In one rural development project (ADRA's Cow banks project), it was possible to detect a positive project impact on farm family incomes. The project initiated changes to households' farming patterns by loaning cows to poor households in the project area (Appendix 3). For many families, this was the first opportunity to include cows in their farming systems.

The most visible short term effect of the project has been increased rice production for the majority of participating farm households. This increase was attributed to the use of manure in their rice fields. For example, farmers in Da Bac District in Hoa Binh Province advised that dung produced by one cow in a year can produce between 1-2 tonnes of compost, which can increase rice production by 100-200 kg of paddy rice per household per crop. (Non-project villagers visited reported that their rice production had not changed much during the project period).

The increase in production is used for family consumption, contributing to reducing food shortage. At a price of 2500 VND/kg of paddy rice, this translates into savings in rice purchases of up to 500 000 VND per year per household, money they can now use for other purchases. The Team also estimated that a household with one cow can save up to 200 000 VND per rice crop in fertiliser purchase. The Team was informed that the cumulative income effect of the project has enabled many households to cross the official poverty threshold (less than 15 kg of milled rice or 50 000 VND per month). Indeed, in some communes such as An Nghia the number of households classified as poor has reduced from 36 per cent in 1996 to 32 per cent in 1999 because of the project.

While the long term income effects of the project were not estimated, beneficiaries suggested that increases in the size of the herds would substantially boost their future income situation.

AREA's Integrated Community Development project sought to enhance food and economic security of communities living in the buffer zone of Ba Vi national Park. It undertook considerable research in the project area to support the establishment of agricultural, fish and medicinal plant production experimental demonstration trials. Project data and discussions with beneficiaries in the project area suggest that increased fish and agricultural production occurred on these experimental demonstration sites. While direct participants in these trials are likely to have benefited from increased production as a result of considerable on-site research and technical assistance and support provided by the project, the contribution of project activities to enhancing economic and food security in the project area will occur through wider adoption of project-initiated production techniques. AREA reported that project-initiated farming techniques had extended beyond the demonstration trials with nominal project support in the 4 communes where agricultural activities were concentrated, and were having a positive impact on the lives of beneficiaries. However, the data also shows that increased agricultural production levels similar to those achieved in target communes occurred in communes of the Buffer Zone that the project did not target, making it difficult to attribute changes in agricultural production to project-initiated techniques (Appendix 4).

3.2.2 Social Impacts

Social benefits provided by the NGO projects tended to be concentrated in the education and health projects. While social impacts are less amenable to quantification, they can be indicated through the assessment of the extent to which skills, awareness and resources promoted through projects are being used by beneficiaries.

Projects with education and training as their principal goal

All projects included some training activities but two projects (UNICEF and SCA projects) had education as their principal goal. Both projects had a substantial impact in improving access to quality primary school education for those living in remote and mountainous areas through building teacher capacity and improving the education environment.

By promoting multigrade schools, the UNICEF project has provided the only education option for children in remote locations by bringing education services closer to where they live. The enrolment rate in primary school in some remote areas had reached 100 per cent. The evaluation was advised that the project had contributed to the achievement of Universal Primary Education in Hoa Binh Province (Appendix 7). While not all children proceed to lower secondary school, it was evident that a vastly increased number of students do continue than would have been the case without the project.

Teachers interviewed commented that the teaching materials provided by the project have enabled students to engage more actively in learning and to develop learning independence. The teachers felt that the training provided by the project had enabled them to have a positive impact on the children's education. High standards in classroom

participation and interaction between teachers and students, and amongst groups of students, were observed in schools visited.

The policy of selecting teacher trainees from ethnic minority areas and subsequently locating them back in their own communities appears to have had a significant impact on teacher numbers and retention of teachers. Due to cultural or social factors, a high percentage of these teachers were women. The project has enabled them to increase their position and influence within their communities (Chapter 4).

Likewise, the SCA project appears to have made a significant contribution in improving the quality of primary education, particularly in the application of child-centred active teaching methods. The project did assist in strengthening the system of teacher training at the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) in Phan Thiet. In discussions, project staff indicated that the introduction of active teaching methods has resulted in over 90 per cent of teachers in the target area adopting the approaches, with between 40-50 per cent doing it confidently. To the extent that better qualified and more competent teachers in the new methodology are now emerging from the TTI, there has been an improvement in the overall standard of education beyond project areas.

Discussions with teachers and pupils in one project school revealed changes that have occurred in the classroom atmosphere due to the project. They commented on the relaxed learning environment, closer relationships between teachers and students and increased confidence of students. From classroom observation and discussions with principals and teachers, it was evident that the principles and techniques introduced were understood and being applied. School students, both males and females, appeared to be interacting well in groups during one classroom visit. Project staff and teachers indicated that because of the project more children now attend school and the rates of repeating and student drop-out had decreased. Students and staff in the single non-project school visited were aware of the benefits of the new methodology and expressed a desire to be included in any future expansion of the project.

Both the UNICEF and SCA projects appear to have engendered high levels of parental and community involvement in school activities. Community support for the education of their children is evident in the contributions that local people make in terms of providing labour and local materials to improve school facilities.

Projects with improved health services as their principal goal

There are five projects in this category (APHEDA, AFAP, CARE, and two WVA projects.)

The APHEDA project was very successful in generating changes in how occupational health and safety issues are dealt with at the workplace in Vietnam. It raised public awareness and increased the concern of a large number of people about issues of labour safety and hygiene, creating a positive impact on employers, workers and trade unions. This was achieved through the training of health workers in occupational health centres, factory medical workers, local medical workers and OHS representatives at the workplace.

Discussions with management and workers in one factory indicated the nature and extent of change in workers' behaviour at the workplace. Workers on the shop floor and management believe that increased awareness of OHS issues have contributed to reductions of about 75 per cent in labour accidents since 1996. OHS posters were displayed throughout the work area of the company visited. Workers were observed using protective gear such as ear plugs and protective clothing. Both male and female workers interviewed could explain OHS issues in relation to their own as well as the company's responsibilities. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to determine how widespread this awareness of OHS issues is in other establishments.

The Team was informed that the testing equipment used to monitor workplace hazards such as dust and noise levels had assisted the Occupational and Environmental Health Centre in Hanoi to make successful recommendations for the expansion of the list of occupational conditions and diseases covered by the compensation regulations.

In a similar vein, the AFAP's Dengue Control project was rated as achieving best practice outcomes. It combined the use of Mesocyclops in household water containers, training of health workers, and community mobilisation programs to reduce mosquito larva numbers by over 90 per cent in project areas (Appendix 2). The evaluation was informed that the 1998 dengue season was Vietnam's worst with 234 000 cases of dengue/dengue haemorrhagic fever but that project villages recorded only 35 cases, significantly lower than the number in other areas.

The use of both male and female collaborators and the mobilisation of school children have proved very effective mechanisms to promote household stagnant water clean-up campaigns around housing areas. Women collaborators hold leadership positions in their communities and have achieved considerable status as a result of the success of project activities (Chapter 4).

The project has undoubtedly improved the health conditions of the beneficiaries in the project area and may have contributed to reducing the pressure on hospitals in the area. The evaluation was advised that family members now have more time working in their farms instead of caring for dengue patients or being ill themselves. The project has encouraged a sense of community responsibility and autonomy in managing preventative public health problems, particularly those related to waterborne and mosquito transmitted diseases in the project area. It is clear that the impact will be sustainable after project completion.

The impact of the project has extended beyond the project area. Non-project communes visited were emulating the use of Mesocyclops in household water containers without project support. The diffusion of the techniques had occurred through word of mouth and TV campaigns. The villagers interviewed expressed the need for training for their own community.

The two WVA HIV/AIDS projects appear to have contributed to raising the awareness of people in project areas about HIV/AIDS issues. For example, the Da Nang AIDS Education and Awareness project developed HIV/AIDS educational materials for schools. Discussions with school officials, teachers and students in one school visited indicated that these materials were appreciated. Effective pedagogic approach to interactive and participatory teaching of HIV/AIDS materials was observed. One outcome has been the lessening of uneasiness associated with open discussion of sex and prevention strategies. Because young people are in the early stages of developing attitudes and behaviour related to sex and relationships, early intervention is likely to have an impact on slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Outreach worker training within the two WVA projects appears to have been the most successful of the components. It targeted not only CSWs and IDUs, but also ordinary people. These were trained in management, prevention and care of people living with AIDS, as well as communication and counselling skills. Outreach workers interviewed perceive attitude change amongst IDUs, CSWs and truck drivers that they attribute to project activities. Support networks have been established to assist individuals with HIV/AIDS, underpinned by more effective counselling. While they thought community awareness was improving, they also believed that many people still privately discriminate against them. The Team also met with frontline social networkers trained under the Highway One project. Through discussions and role play, these workers demonstrated an understanding and awareness of HIV/AIDS issues and strategies to create potential opportunities for the transfer of information to truck drivers.

Specific training activities for women coupled with IEC activities, were shown to raise women's self-esteem. Such changes in self-esteem appeared to have promoted women's capacity to take appropriate relationship decisions, and to pass on information about HIV and AIDS to their peers and families.

Finally, the CARE Assertiveness Training project was highly successful in documenting methods for teaching culturally appropriate assertiveness skills to women for the purpose of safer sex negotiation.

Women trainees interviewed were enthusiastic about the training they received and explained in detail what they had learned. Some showed through role play how they could now deal more assertively in sexual negotiations with their husbands. Most women felt that they now have knowledge and skills to enable them to discuss HIV/AIDS issues with their families and women friends. They said that the training had improved their self-esteem and the negotiation skills learned had wider application to other activities in public life. Women who have been trained indicated their willingness to share their knowledge amongst family friends and immediate neighbours within their communes. However, it appears that wider dissemination of project outcomes beyond communes is likely to be low. Some women thought that project outcomes could have been enhanced if some training had been provided to their spouses to cultivate a more accepting atmosphere.

3.2.3 Poverty alleviation

Guidelines for the NGO program have poverty alleviation as an overall objective. (Box 1.1). The Evaluation sought to assess the extent to which NGOs evaluated were contributing towards this objective.

Few NGOs had poverty alleviation as an explicit objective in their project designs. However, it was clear from discussions with project staff that all projects had poverty alleviation as a concern during project implementation. Eight projects targeted poor provinces and poor districts and communes within those provinces. A significant number of projects had project activities targeted at ethnic minority groups that are generally among the poorest in Vietnam. Seven projects were rated as satisfactory overall or better in terms of their poverty reach (Table 3.2).

TABLE 3.2: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Fully satisfactory
ADRA Cow Banks	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Fully satisfactory
CARE Assertiveness Training	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Satisfactory overall
APHEDA Workplace Training ^a	Marginally satisfactory
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

^a The evaluation assessed the performance of this project in relation to poverty alleviation because it had a stated goal of 'assisting with the alleviation of poverty of workers by improving workers' and management's knowledge about hazards relating to the work environment'. Its main activities were related to workplace safety and the link to poverty alleviation appeared to be indirect.

Three projects were very effective in benefiting the very poor. ADRA's Cow banks project specifically set out to target the poorest members of the community and project staff worked hard to ensure that these were well represented in beneficiary groups. However, as discussed in Appendix 3, some not so poor farmers (according to the Government scale) also benefited. The SCA project provided scholarships to disadvantaged children to enable them to attend school. However, the numbers involved were relatively small and the benefits are unlikely to be spread more widely without continued provision of these scholarships. In the UNICEF project the poorest benefited because some project activities such as education materials for children were provided to everyone in the designated project areas.

3.2.4 Environmental impact

In the health and education projects, environmental issues are less relevant. In the two rural development projects there are some potential environmental effects.

AREA's Community Development for BVNP project sought to address a wide range of economic, environmental and social constraints facing the National Park and its environs in order to protect the environmental integrity and biodiversity of the Park and surrounding areas. The project provided training and conducted agricultural, aquacultural and medicinal plant trials to demonstrate environmentally sustainable farming systems, and to reduce the human pressure on the National Park. The project conducted considerable research to identify plant species in an environmentally sensitive area to understand species diversification, their abundance, distribution and status, and the ecology within which medicinal plants grow.

The project improved the skills of participants and raised their environmental awareness through the Participatory Farmer Training Program. It also developed and demonstrated more environmentally sensitive farming systems, including on sloping land. However, the adoption of these farming systems to the broad farming community in the project area remains to be shown.

The evaluation felt that ADRA's Cow banks project should have undertaken some environmental assessment during project design. It appears that little attention was given to the carrying capacity of the land in sustaining increasing numbers of cows. Lack of appropriate fodder in the project area could lead to environmental problems in the future as cattle numbers increase.

3.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

TABLE 3.3: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - SUSTAINABILITY OF BENEFITS

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Fully satisfactory
APHEDA Workplace Training	Fully satisfactory
CARE Assertiveness Training	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Fully satisfactory
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
ADRA Cow Banks	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

Four projects were judged as fully satisfactory in terms of the likely sustainability of project benefits. Four projects were rated as satisfactory overall and one project as marginally satisfactory (Table 3.3).

It was apparent from these projects that in Vietnam, the likelihood of sustainability of benefits depends on three key factors:

- working within existing government structures at different levels, including mass organisations;
- community participation and a sense of ownership of project activities; and
- recurrent cost budgets to maintain services developed.

In the cases rated as fully satisfactory (APHEDA, AFAP, CARE and SCA projects), NGOs were very effective in working with and strengthening the capacity of local government agencies and local authorities. The quality of the relationship between NGO staff and the implementing partners had a crucial bearing on the success of the projects and the likely sustainability of benefits. As noted in Chapter 2, the training of counterpart staff contributes to building their capacity that is crucial for maintaining project activities after phase-out.

A related factor is that working within existing local structures opens up opportunities for the project to link with existing government programs. As a result, the project may benefit from the funding provided by the Government to support national programs. Two projects (AFAP and UNICEF projects) have benefited from national program support leading to the expansion of project activities (Chapter 2).

Beneficiaries' participation in project activities was found to increase chances of project sustainability (Chapter 2). Projects rated satisfactory overall or better appeared to have been effective in involving beneficiaries in project activities. Again, training and capacity building for beneficiaries was found to result in increased participation in project implementation and community enthusiasm and support for project activities.

Most NGO projects have great difficulty in finding a means of being self-financing. However, some projects have incorporated a strategy during implementation that requires beneficiaries to contribute towards the cost of administering the project after phase-out. For instance, ADRA's Cow Banks project requires beneficiaries to pay a fee of not less than 50 000 VND to enable the management committees to provide the same level of service as that provided during the project. The AFAP project has sought to improve financial sustainability through linking community recycling of discarded containers with reduction of small larval habitats to generate on-going income to support implementation costs. It has also put forward proposals to local authorities to use funds from other income-generation projects to cross-subsidise project activities.

The Team felt that even if financial sustainability may be difficult to achieve, NGOs should from the outset consider how they are going to address the issues of financing the sustainability of innovative activities they initiate. One option is to try and secure financial

commitment from counterpart agencies at the beginning of a project. It is also possible for a project to include income-generation activities in its design to enable beneficiaries to make some contribution to enhance the sustainability of project initiatives.

3.4 Findings and lessons

- All projects had made at least some positive impact on the lives of the intended beneficiaries. While project impacts tended to be localised, in some cases benefits spread to non-project areas without project support.
- Few NGOs had poverty alleviation as an explicit objective in project design, although it was often said by project staff to be an implicit objective in project implementation. The limited treatment of poverty alleviation in designs (and also of gender and environment) is a contributing factor to the low performance of projects in these areas. Integration of poverty alleviation, gender and environmental objectives into projects is necessary at the design stage.
- The sustainability of project outcomes was an area that could be improved for many NGO projects. Sustainability of many projects is not assured unless a strategy for sustainability is built into the project design. In Vietnam, sustainability is enhanced when projects: encourage community participation in all phases; work within existing government structures at different levels, and mass organisation; and build opportunities for recurrent cost funding into project design.

4. GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT IN NGO PROJECTS IN VIETNAM

4.1 Introduction

The Government of Vietnam recognises that significant disparities exist between women and men in economic, social and political spheres. Over the years it has put in place strategies aimed at closing the gender gap by improving the opportunities for women to participate in development activities (see for example, SRV 1995, Stephens 1997). The results of these efforts are yet to be realised more widely, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Many Australian NGOs in Vietnam work in rural areas across a wide range of sectors, including agriculture, health and education. They can make a large contribution to ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from development activities.

Australia recognises equality of men and women as an important development goal. Australia's aid program aims to promote equal opportunities for women and men as participants and beneficiaries of development (AusAID 1997). In taking this approach, it is recognised that sustainable development can only be achieved with the active participation of all members of the community, whether male or female.

This chapter draws on evaluation findings and looks at how far and in what ways Australian NGOs in Vietnam have tried to incorporate gender in their development activities. It is hoped that comments and lessons drawn from project experience will facilitate and inform the continuing dialogue on gender between AusAID and NGOs.

4.1.1 Evaluation context

Initial approaches to ensuring women benefited from development focused on projects specifically targeted at women. Sometimes specific objectives within a project focused on women's activities. This Women in Development (WID) approach has largely been superseded by the Gender and Development (GAD) approach. Under GAD the situation of women is no longer analysed independently of, but rather in relation to, that of men. That said, it might still be appropriate to undertake separate projects (or components of projects) for women that redress the imbalance in access to economic and social opportunities.

This evaluation of gender issues in NGO projects was based on policies in place at the time of project implementation. Most of the projects evaluated were funded during the transition from a WID to GAD policy.

4.2 Evaluation findings on gender

Discussions with project staff and beneficiaries suggest that most projects were taking gender into account in their development activities. In five projects there was evidence of NGOs incorporating gender issues into projects at the planning and design stages. While four projects did not have explicit gender objectives in their designs, gender issues were

recognised during project implementation. In most cases, these projects had a positive impact on women despite their lack of involvement in project designs.

Four projects were assessed as fully satisfactory in incorporating gender in project activities and having a positive impact on women, while three projects were rated as satisfactory overall (Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - WID/GAD

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Fully satisfactory
APHEDA Workplace Training	Fully satisfactory
CARE Assertiveness Training	Fully satisfactory
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Fully satisfactory
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Satisfactory overall
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
ADRA Cow Banks	Marginally satisfactory
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

4.2.1 Findings on projects with gender objectives in design

Amongst the nine projects evaluated, there was only one specific WID project - CARE's *Assertiveness Training Project*. While the project's baseline studies were not reviewed, it was clear that this project was based on women's needs. Information had been gathered participatively and IEC materials had been developed and trialed with women. Thirty four women were trained as trainers (TOTs), who then trained 2400 women community representatives through the Women's Union (Appendix 5).

TOTs demonstrated knowledge and commitment, expressing appreciation for the training they received, as well as the clarity of the training manual produced by the project. Women interviewed showed high levels of enthusiasm, explaining in detail what they had learned. They particularly expressed appreciation for information on female anatomy and on STDs, as well as the training in assertiveness and negotiation skills provided by the project. One female illustrated through mini role play how she could deal more assertively with her husband. Other women in this group advised that the training had similarly empowered them, as individuals and as a group. They felt that they now had knowledge and skills about how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS. This gave them leadership skills, as well as status within the community, and enabled them to discuss HIV/AIDS issues with their family and female friends in the community. However, it appears that wider dissemination of project outcomes beyond these communes is likely to be low. Some women commented on cultural factors that tend to inhibit open discussion

of sexual issues with people with whom they are not familiar. Both women and men interviewed expressed the desire for an information project on HIV/AIDS targeted at men.

Four projects had at least one specific women's objective set within the framework of a larger project.

The World Vision *Highway One HIV/AIDS Project* had as one of its objectives the development of appropriate behaviour change communication (BCC) models for truck drivers and women about HIV/AIDS (Appendix 9). This project provides a good example of utilising appropriate gender sensitive participatory approaches to information gathering for a public health project.

Information gathered through participatory learning and action (PLA) methodology appeared to have provided sex-disaggregated data. It also facilitated insights into the behaviour and attitudes of both women and men, enabling the development of gender sensitive IEC materials and BCC models. However, the processes and approach to the development of the BCC models appear not to have been documented leaving a vacuum in terms of lessons that might otherwise have been learned

Female and male peer educators as well as frontline social networkers were trained. Those interviewed demonstrated their communications skills and knowledge of HIV/AIDS prevention through simulation and role play. Both women and men were confident at being able to communicate information about HIV/AIDS and safe sex. Women and men trained under this project have increased their status within the community. It is likely that some women will assume leadership positions in due course.

A related objective was to implement a BCC program incorporating appropriate care strategies among poor women in selected districts. While this is still in its early stages of implementation, 40 women have been trained in HIV/AIDS and STDs while 20 have been trained as peer educators. The objective seeks to address women's self-esteem, providing information about HIV/AIDS and modern day relationships between women and men. Activities included mural painting and information sessions for women and young girls. Women-specific IEC materials were developed and piloted. These were very much appreciated by both older and younger community women whose status in the community, from their own point of view, appears to have been considerably enhanced by training and knowledge provided by the project.

The APHEDA *Workplace Community Health and Training Project* is an example of a health project with specific achievable occupational health and safety (OHS) objectives for both women and men. The project design was based on knowledge of gender issues in the workplace and sex-disaggregated data and has led to gender sensitive OHS training of female and male trade union officials as well as shop floor officials and workers.

Both female and male representatives from the Light and Heavy Industry Unions, as well as from the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour expressed considerable satisfaction about project outcomes (Appendix 1). While IEC activities could not be evaluated,

outputs indicate they have been gender sensitive. One of the key objectives of this project was to provide for two women's health centres: one in Hanoi and another in Ho Chi Minh City. Although time constraints did not permit an evaluation of these centres, it is understood that women workers participated in developing them. It is understood that the centres provide material on a variety of women's health concerns, not just on OHS issues.

In one establishment visited by the Team, women were conspicuous by their presence in the company. The Managing Director was a woman as were several other key functional heads and about two thirds of the factory hands were women. Appropriate action on OHS at the level of the shop floor and at the company's health centre, appeared to be taking place. Managers and shop floor representatives were aware of their OHS responsibility to workers on the shop floor. Women and men workers interviewed were able to explain OHS procedures with respect to their particular job and could describe the meaning of various OHS posters on walls. In this particular establishment the rate of industrial accidents has apparently decreased over the last five years.

This project, as well as promoting female and male workers' health, also promoted women in leadership within the Trade Union Movement. Moreover, women were an integral part of the Project Management Committee.

The SCA *Binh Thuan Basic Education and Teacher Training Project* provides a good example of attempting to facilitate girls' education to become equivalent with that of boys. The project sought to increase the enrolment rate, especially of girls, and attendance rate in commune schools. The new pedagogic methodology was aimed at achieving equitable student classroom participation (Appendix 7).

Under this new system, girls initially had higher achievements than boys in Grades 1-3. However, boys tended to obtain higher marks in Grade 4-5. This is apparently due to domestic responsibilities being imposed on girls at later ages. Both teachers and parents indicated that parents tried not to discriminate against girls. They were apparently aware of the increased life opportunities that education offered girls and women. This attests to effective gender-sensitive IEC activities. Discrimination against girls continuing their education, however, sometimes happened out of necessity as poor families have few labour options, particularly at harvest time. This clearly has implications for girls' education, negatively impacting on their future options and eventually on those of their own children. Factors beyond the control of the project appeared to have mitigated against increased enrolment, particularly of girls. While pass rates in the final year of primary school were of the order of 85 per cent, lack of sex-disaggregated pass rates mitigated against meaningful evaluation of the impact of primary education on girls under this project.

There was a higher percentage of women teachers than men. This reflects cultural tendencies in Vietnam where women teachers tend to predominate at primary level.

A project can have gender objectives in its design but lack of participatory techniques and lack of disaggregated sex data, can considerably hamper project outcomes in terms of gender. Notwithstanding such approaches, however, some positive gender 'spinoff' may still result from project activities.

AREA's *Integrated Community Development Project for BVNP*, did recognise that women had a role in all project activities. The project provided training which women attended, having been selected by the local commune leaders. Women trainees interviewed expressed their appreciation for the training and the agricultural knowledge they received. AREA provided data on gender division of labour in the project area and data on the number of male and female participants in project activities (Appendix 4). However, much of the data on gender for agricultural and fish experimental demonstration trials appears to correspond to the number of males and females belonging to households in which a representative participated in project activities. While the Team believes that women will undoubtedly benefit from project activities by virtue of belonging to a targeted household, project implementation processes were generally unclear as to how the constraints to women's participation in development were being addressed and how women's interests were being facilitated. Women were being assisted but not in a way which fundamentally changed their position in the project area.

4.2.2 Findings on projects that incorporated gender in implementation

The AFAP's *Dengue Surveillance and Control Project* was outstanding in its use of gender-sensitive participatory processes in implementation, monitoring and evaluation despite women's lack of involvement in project design.

Utilization of women collaborators from the Women's Union has proved a very effective mechanism to convey information to communities about the dengue mosquito and to promote household stagnant water cleanup campaigns around housing areas. Female collaborators have been the key to encouraging households to utilize mesocyclops to reduce mosquito larvae. Women have achieved considerable status as a result of training and community activities and appear to be very well respected as leaders by both men and women within their communities.

This project provides a good illustration of the need to understand the role that men and women have in any given community. Project activities have promoted, on the one hand, women's strategic interests in enhancing their status in the community. At the same time activities provided for women's and men's practical needs - the improvement of their health. The project has achieved success in terms of gender in a culturally sensitive manner and generated a high level of enthusiasm amongst both men and women. That said, women are still under-represented in the project management team.

The UNICEF's *Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities and Disadvantaged Children Project* was generally gender-sensitive in terms of facilitating equal opportunities for girls and

boys at primary level. The impact of effective gender sensitive IEC activities were demonstrated when ethnic minority parents interviewed advised that they saw the education of their girls as being particularly important.

Multi-grade classes were co-educational, half the children being girls. Girls had equal opportunity to participate in individual and group activities and were most often nominated as group leaders in classroom activities observed. Respect was accorded to them as group leaders.

In terms of children from poor families being assisted to attend primary school, it is understood that the People's Committee at the commune level issues certificates to exempt both girls and boys from compulsory (maintenance of school facilities) and optional school charges (health insurance). The project's philosophy of non-discrimination towards girls and facilitating their education in the same way as boys, raises community and government awareness of gender equity issues.

The World Vision's *Da Nang Aids Education and Awareness Project* designed and conducted AIDS education campaigns amongst school children and young adults. The nature of the coverage of project activities ensured that gender issues were taken into account in implementation.

Gender sensitive participatory processes appear to have been involved in developing teaching methodology and materials both of which were highly appreciated by female and male teaching staff, as well as girls and boys, at the school visited. While only one-third of the curriculum had been taught due to the late introduction of materials, it was clear from discussions that both girls and boys had already been significantly impacted by the HIV/AIDS information. They could easily explain what HIV and AIDS were, the means of transmission and how to prevent becoming HIV positive. Both female and male students and teachers appeared to be comfortable discussing such issues in a mixed class. It is difficult to determine the direct impact of the teaching methodology and materials, in view of the many different IEC activities promoted by the National and Provincial AIDS Committees. Nevertheless, it appears that this project provides an appropriate complement to other HIV/AIDS activities in this part of Vietnam.

ADRA's *Vietnam Cow Banks Project* had considerable potential to help improve women's access to economic resources. However, it was hampered by project design that lacked the understanding of gender issues. Lack of sex-disaggregated data meant that it was difficult to evaluate project outcomes on women. Very little baseline survey analysis appears to have been carried out. Further, there appeared to have been no prior analysis of the gender division of labour or the gender profile on access to and control over resources. While the project provided training in feeding and caring for a cow for both women and men, no specific provision appear to have been made for women's time and place constraints. Although women could explain at length how to promote cow and cow stall hygiene, how to provide appropriate fodder for the animal, and how to utilize manure to the best advantage to improve cultivation practices, project implementation processes were generally unclear as to how women's interests were being facilitated.

Notwithstanding the apparent lack of gender sensitive approaches, this project appeared to have impacted significantly in terms of recipient households (Chapter 3). Women will undoubtedly benefit from increased rice production and family incomes. However, lack of consideration of women in such projects leaves women's position in society largely unchanged.

4.3 Overall gender lessons

- In Vietnam, serious and effective attention to participation by both women and men at all stages of the project from conception through to monitoring and evaluation is essential to ensure faster growth of local development capacity and more balanced, relevant and appropriate project outcomes.
- Effective projects need to be based on gender sensitive baseline data. This should include an analysis and understanding of the gender division of labour and the gender profile of access to and control over resources. In Vietnam, data produced by the project should always be disaggregated by sex to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of outcomes on gender.
- Women's stand alone projects, or women-specific objectives within projects, still have a role in improving women's self-confidence and self-esteem without being dominated by men. However, consideration needs to be given to complementing such stand alone actions for women with other complementary activities for men, particularly with respect to sex education and providing information on HIV/AIDS.

5. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION AND REPORTING

5.1 Introduction

The NGOPI states that AusAID is required to assess the performance of NGO schemes. Performance measurement of schemes is based on self-assessment of activities by NGOs. At the end of each annual reporting period, NGOs document in their activity reports the major activity outputs of their projects using the performance measures they had proposed. Using this analysis, NGOs include in their final activity reports an assessment of the extent to which each of a project's major development objectives will be achieved (or are likely to be achieved for interim reporting purposes). AusAID may check the assessments by evaluating a sample of NGO activities.

The majority of activities in this evaluation were contracted under guidelines and arrangements (eg. the Manual of Procedures) that pre-date the current NGOPI guidelines. However, the evaluation was able to make some preliminary comments about the use of NGO monitoring systems and the appropriateness of project design as a basis for making judgements about the performance of NGO activities.

Objectives

The evaluation had three objectives relevant to assessing the reliability of NGO performance information:

- to contribute to AusAID's understanding of the capacity and systems NGOs use to obtain and compile reliable performance information in monitoring reports. This will involve:
- a preliminary assessment of the use of the NGO self-rating system as a measure of activity and program performance;
- to begin to assess the utility and appropriateness of using an activity management system, drawing on AusAID's recently revised Activity Monitoring Brief, to identify NGO activity reporting and collection of performance information; and
- to contribute to the development of a NGO review/evaluation strategy for accreditation and review purposes.

5.2 Performance information in monitoring reports

5.2.1 Reporting on performance

In keeping with the arrangements under which projects were originally contracted, the evaluation sought to establish the reliability of judgements made in monitoring reports about the extent to which the major development objectives of projects had been or are likely to be achieved. It did this by examining baseline data used to make judgements

about activity performance; how data is collected and who collects data; who reports data and who analyses data; and how activity performance can or could be improved through monitoring and information dissemination.

Most NGOs were assessed as satisfactory overall in terms of reporting on project performance and outcomes (Table 5.1). However, more room exists for NGOs to improve their monitoring systems and reporting on performance.

TABLE 5.1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT PERFORMANCE - PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING⁶

Project	Rating
AFAP Dengue Surveillance and Control	Best practice
APHEDA Workplace Training	Fully satisfactory
SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education	Satisfactory overall
UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities	Satisfactory overall
CARE Assertiveness Training	Satisfactory overall
ADRA Cow Banks	Satisfactory overall
WVA Da Nang AIDS Education	Satisfactory overall
WVA National Highway One HIV/AIDS	Satisfactory overall
AREA Integrated Community Development for BVNP	Marginally satisfactory

5.2.2 Baseline data

AusAID's NGO funding guidelines focus on the alleviation of poverty in a direct and tangible way. Therefore, AusAID does not normally fund research projects through its NGO schemes. However, some research activities may be justifiable to ensure proper targeting of activities during project implementation and to enable appropriate monitoring and evaluation. Cost benefits need to be kept in mind when collecting baseline data. Ideally, much baseline data might be collected during project implementation, particularly from participants feedback.

The Team was satisfied that, where relevant, most projects evaluated collected good quality baseline data before or during project implementation. The APHEDA project surveyed workers and managers' attitudes to and knowledge of workplace safety issues to design a training package. The CARE Australia and WVA projects used interviews and focus group discussions to develop HIV/AIDS awareness raising materials. Data was collected through surveys delivered by project participants; from government records; through research undertaken by project staff; and through research and analysis

⁶ Quality standards covered by this indicator included: appropriate data gathered and used as a basis for assessing project performance; appropriate monitoring systems are in place to capture information upon which to assess project performance; and use of participatory approaches to collection, dissemination and sharing of information.

undertaken by expatriate or technical experts. Data was also often collected as project activities were implemented, particularly through evaluation questionnaires distributed at training sessions.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research proved a useful method for gauging attitudes and opinions relating to workplace safety issues; knowledge of HIV/AIDS; and understanding of sexual relations, for example. For several projects (eg APHEDA, WVA and CARE), the results of qualitative research formed the basis for the development of training packages and IEC materials. The Team believed that information obtained through qualitative research could provide a useful basis for assessments of activity performance. However, it was apparent that there could be some difficulties in using qualitative baseline data to measure project performance. Factors external to a project, such as the media or mass campaigns, appeared to influence attitude change in some projects. Also, it would be inherently difficult to measure attitude change amongst diverse and mobile populations such as truck drivers (WVA Highway No. 1 project).

Nevertheless, the evaluation found that where qualitative research was well designed into a project, it assisted NGOs and local partners to identify in the course of implementation what outputs and objectives were being sufficiently addressed (through project activities or other influences) or required further or different interventions. While follow-up surveys may be unjustifiably expensive or unnecessary, evaluation questionnaires and feedback sessions were regarded as useful means to assess project performance during implementation (eg CARE project).

Quantitative research

Quantitative research was used to obtain data for assessments of the physical and social environments of project areas (eg. the AFAP and AREA projects), and provided information to target beneficiaries and beneficiary localities. Statistics produced by GOV were an important source of quantitative baseline data. Expatriate and local technical expertise was used to collect other data. For example, surveys of dengue mosquito larvae in water supplies provided a scientific basis upon which to measure the effectiveness of dengue control methods and awareness raising and training programs for the AFAP project.

However, quantitative research and follow-up surveys appeared to be expensive and resource intensive. It was felt that quantitative research should, therefore, only target factors identified as being able to be influenced by project activities within available time and resource constraints.

Coordination

Notwithstanding the usefulness of information obtained through research activities, the Team believed that some research viewed during the evaluation was generic in nature and possibly duplicated elsewhere. It was aware of a range of social research undertaken by

government authorities, NGOs and local organisations in Vietnam. To avoid expensive and unnecessary duplication of research, it is considered important that NGOs use available resources and share information, including IEC materials, with other NGOs working in Vietnam. Lessons and materials from activities in other countries in the region dealing with similar issues might also contribute to development of IEC materials and training programs.

5.2.3 Monitoring systems

The Team was generally satisfied that most NGOs were using satisfactory monitoring systems to assess the progress of project activities. As discussed in Chapter 2, in Vietnam projects are usually managed or delivered through existing administrative structures at the Provincial, District or Commune levels, or a combination. Typically, a Project Management Board (PMB), set up to oversee the project, would obtain data from project workers and submit reports to the NGO. The NGO would then make monitoring visits to project sites and meet or confer with the PMB to assess the reliability of data. Interventions would then be agreed with or through the PMB. The UNICEF Australia project was an exception, as it is being administered through the multilateral UNICEF agency in Vietnam, in that management and reporting for project activities is undertaken through the Ministry of Education and Training.

As discussed in Chapter 1, AusAID's funding guidelines require NGOs to use existing community structures, where possible, to implement activities. There are monitoring benefits in delivering projects through existing local structures. Established mechanisms and systems report a range of information for government purposes, such as health, education and social indicator information. These systems can support the NGO's own monitoring systems and data.

However, when considering the use of social and economic data collected and reported by government authorities, it is important to consider whether the data is appropriate and relevant for the NGO's monitoring purposes. NGOs still need to be closely involved in the monitoring process, whether it be through conducting monitoring, or guiding local partners to undertake monitoring activities.

Improving quality

An important aspect of monitoring at all levels is the quality of information provided, and how this information may improve project performance. Reporting of how many people have been trained and are using skills in classrooms, how many cattle have been born, or how many households have used a new method to plant crops is useful data, but it does not necessarily provide an indication of the effectiveness of project activities.

The Team found that where beneficiaries actively participate in the monitoring process, the quality of the monitoring information is enhanced. In general, feedback during project implementation from local project staff, and the opportunity for beneficiaries to influence appropriate revisions to project activities contributed to the quality of

monitoring information in projects. Quality monitoring information provided a firm basis for judgments about the likely achievement of project objectives, and appropriate interventions to improve project activities.

5.3 Self-rating system and reporting formats

AusAID uses a rating scale to assess the extent to which aid activities and funding programs are achieving their objectives. A 1 to 5 rating scale has been adopted by AusAID (5 equating to best practice; 1 equating to weak), which will replace the scale contained in the NGOPI.

Only two projects had been contracted under the current NGOPI reporting arrangements. One was yet to report (WVA Highway One project) and the other (UNICEF Multigrade Education project) expected project objectives to be fully achieved (a rating of '5'). The evaluation felt the UNICEF rating to be a little high at this stage, although the project did appear to be progressing towards meeting most objectives (see Appendix 7). Both projects appeared to be gathering appropriate information through monitoring systems to make judgements about activity performance.

While the other projects were contracted under previous arrangements, their monitoring systems generally appeared adequate to provide the performance information required by AusAID under current NGO scheme guidelines.

The Team believed that the current NGO reporting format was satisfactory for collecting activity performance information, and could therefore be used as the basis for analysing self-rating information to assess overall scheme performance. However, this will need to be further explored in future evaluations that examine NGO activities funded under current arrangements.

Improving the quality of NGO performance information

Through assessment of the way NGO projects are monitored and designed, the following suggestions could improve performance information:

- good baseline data combined with ongoing consultation with beneficiaries provides a firm basis upon which to make judgements about appropriate and timely interventions, and later about the achievement of major development objectives;
- clear definition of major development objectives, major activity outputs and performance indicators enhances the development of an appropriate monitoring system and can support judgements about achievement of objectives; and
- participation of beneficiaries in project design contributes to specification of relevant and realistic outputs and performance indicators.

5.4 Recommendations for a NGO cluster evaluation strategy

The Vietnam NGO cluster evaluation examined projects contracted under mainly past arrangements. All but one NGO had Full accreditation with AusAID, so the evaluation was an opportunity to gain an understanding of how projects have been undertaken in the past, and how the agencies are dealing with the new arrangements. The following points are suggestions to assist the development of future evaluations or reviews of NGO activities:

- Future evaluations should target only those activities funded under the current arrangements so that an emphasis can be placed on what activities are achieving during project implementation (ie. delivery of major activity outputs) and what they have stated they are achieving, using specified performance indicators of outputs.
- A cluster approach should be undertaken to cover a useful number of NGOs upon which to base findings and recommendations; minimise costs; and to make relevant comparisons. Cluster evaluations are also an opportunity to give AusAID a better understanding of how Australian NGOs can contribute to development in particular countries.
- Teams should assess each of the major activity outputs stated in project reporting. Through interviews with project staff, management bodies, local partners and beneficiaries, an assessment can be made as to whether an output has been delivered, the quality of the output, and the reliability of the stated performance using the specified indicators of performance. Assessment of the participation of beneficiaries and other project participants can assist the Team in making judgements about the quality of outputs and the likely level of continued implementation quality.
- Major activity outputs should be related to major development objectives, which should be consistent with the goal of the funding scheme. While an assessment may have been made of the relevance of outputs and objectives during project selection and approval, the Team should assess the practicalities of project activities being able to influence achievement of major development objectives.
- While there may be no single systematic link between delivery of major activity outputs and achievement of major development objectives, the Team should use the rule that where outputs have been successfully delivered according to the proposed implementation schedule (eg. Year One, Year Two), then best practice, in terms of assessing achievement of major development objectives, is likely to have been followed. Where this has not occurred, the Team may need to confer with the NGO as to why a particular rating judgement has been made.

- Individual Team-member checklists which rate achievement of a project's major activity outputs, or the quality of judgements about performance, may assist the Team as a whole in making judgements about appropriate ratings for the activity.
- The Team should allow sufficient time to develop questions prior to visiting the project site.
- Monitoring systems should be established at the start of an evaluation, so that their quality and reliability can be tested through evaluation activities.
- Evaluations are a useful source of information for both evaluated and other NGOs to help them improve activity implementation and monitoring. Highlighting well-conducted activities and providing suggestions to improve projects should be incorporated in evaluation reports. In other cases, it may be more pertinent to forward suggestions directly to the NGO concerned.

5.5 Summary of key lessons

- Well-defined qualitative research can assist NGOs and Vietnamese partners to identify, in the course of implementation, what objectives are being sufficiently addressed (through project activities or other influences) and what objectives require further or different interventions.
- In Vietnam, quantitative research and follow-up surveys can prove expensive, and therefore should only target factors identified as being able to be influenced by project activities within available time and resource constraints.
- To avoid expensive and unnecessary duplication of research, NGOs might make better use of available resources and share information, including IEC materials, with other NGOs working in Vietnam.
- Participation of beneficiaries in monitoring processes, including opportunities for feedback, enhances the quality of monitoring information.
- Good baseline data combined with ongoing consultation with beneficiaries provides a firm basis upon which to make judgements about appropriate and timely interventions, and later about the likely achievement of major development objectives.
- Clear definition of major development objectives, major activity outputs and performance indicators enhances the development of an appropriate monitoring system and can support judgements about likely achievement of objectives.
- Participation of beneficiaries in project design contributes to specification of relevant and realistic outputs and performance indicators.

6. THE ROLE OF AUSTRALIAN NGOS IN VIETNAM

6.1 Introduction

Australian NGOs have operated in Vietnam for many years, providing social services, health care and education and training, often to the poor people in remote and mountainous areas. There are currently about 50 Australian NGOs undertaking projects in that country. The working relationship between Australian NGOs and the GOV appears to be open and positive. Indeed, in discussions with PACCOM and MPI, officials indicated their appreciation for the contribution of Australian NGOs in providing opportunities for capacity building and improved quality of life of the rural poor. This supportive environment is underpinned by a set of regulations that the GOV has put in place to guide the operation of foreign NGOs (see below). One of the objectives of this evaluation was to comment on program delivery and the role of Australian NGOs in Vietnam.

6.2 Regulations governing foreign NGO operations in Vietnam

The GOV recognises the role played by NGOs who work in partnership with its agencies, People's Committees and mass organisations to assist in improving the standard of living of the poor. The thrust of GOV policy on NGOs can be found in two Prime Ministerial decisions (SRV 1996 and SRV 1999):

- Decision No. 340/TTg - *Regulations on the Operation of Foreign Non-Governmental Organisations in Vietnam* (24 May 1996); and
- Decision No. 28/1999/QD-TTg - *Regulations on Management and Usage of Foreign Non-Governmental Organisations' Aid* (23 February 1999).

Under the regulations, foreign NGOs require permission from the GOV in the form of: Permit for Operation, Permit for the Establishment of Project Office, or Permit for the Establishment of Representative Office, to operate in Vietnam. For foreign NGOs to be considered for the Permit for Operation, they must have:

- legal person status according to the laws of their countries of origin or of the countries where their headquarters are based;
- clear statutes, mandates and objectives; and
- conducted or plan to conduct development or humanitarian projects and/or programs that are in line with the socio-economic development policies of Vietnam.

The duration of the permit depends on the nature of NGO activities being undertaken. For instance, a one-year Permit for Operation is given to NGOs undertaking projects, while a six months permit is given to NGOs conducting project appraisals and designs. The Committee for Non-Governmental Organisation Affairs is responsible for the implementation of the regulations, including approving the requests for permit

extensions. The ministries, central agencies, People's organisations and People's Committees of provinces and centrally-administered cities have responsibility to guide, support and supervise the implementation of the present regulations.

The GOV manages all aid sources from NGOs from mobilisation, negotiation and signing of aid agreement, to supervision, monitoring of implementation and evaluation of project outcomes. The approval of NGO-supported projects is regulated as follows:

- The Prime Minister approves NGO projects worth US\$ 0.5 million and above, non-project aid worth over US\$ 200 000, and all emergency aid;
- The Ministers, Chairmen of provinces/centrally-administered cities, Heads of Ministry-equivalent offices, Government offices and mass organisations can approve projects worth less than US\$ 0.5 million⁷ and non-project aid worth less than US\$ 200 000⁸.

Under the new guidelines, MPI will play a key role in coordinating and managing programs and projects supported by NGOs. MPI will undertake this role in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the Vietnam Union of Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Organisations⁹ and related offices.

While these regulations and guidelines have helped to clarify roles to some degree, there appears to be continued uncertainty among NGOs regarding the roles of MPI and PACCOM, including their roles in the registration of NGOs and project approval process. The Team was informed that the GOV is working on clarifying these issues.

6.3 Strengths of Australian NGOs

As discussed previously, the evaluation found that the majority of Australian NGOs were achieving their objectives at a satisfactory overall rating or better. They were generally effective in targeting poor areas contributing to the alleviation of poverty and promotion of sustainable development in Vietnam. The evaluation highlighted a number of strengths of delivering aid in Vietnam through Australian NGOs.

6.3.1 Community level activities

Almost all NGO projects evaluated were particularly effective in targeting activities at the community level and building the capacity of local organisations through participatory methods. Many projects involved an element of training aimed at providing beneficiaries and implementing partners with knowledge and skills in order to increase their self-reliance and encourage a sense of local ownership. For example, beneficiaries were trained as trainers (TOTs), collaborators, peer educators, social networkers and outreach workers. In those projects where local initiatives were encouraged, for example, through their

⁷ However, they need to obtain agreement from the Minister of Planning and Investment before the approval.

⁸ However, they need to obtain agreement from the Minister of Finance before the approval.

⁹ PACCOM is an agency within the Vietnam Union of Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Organisations.

contribution to project planning, design and implementation, there was a better chance of project benefits being sustained. One example is the APHEDA project that was able to involve grass root beneficiaries in the initial planning and subsequent implementation of activities. It was fully satisfactory in achieving its objectives and creating conditions for future sustainability of benefits with comparatively low cost.

In those projects with a strong community focus, relationships between NGOs, project staff and local communities were strong. In most project communities visited, NGO and project staff were well known and respected.

Most NGO projects undertook their community level activities by working within existing local structures. Projects were at their most successful when they complemented, rather than substituted for, the work of government.

6.3.2 Focus on disadvantaged groups

As the discussion in Chapter 3 shows, Australian NGOs were very effective in targeting their activities at disadvantaged areas and poor groups such as ethnic minority communities within those areas. Three examples stand out. The UNICEF project accorded a high priority to the reduction of the high failure and drop-out rates among ethnic minority children in remote, rural and mountainous areas through the promotion of Multigrade and Bilingual Education in primary schools. Project activities included the training of multigrade teachers from remote and mountainous areas and the provision of learning materials to schools. Project documents claim that about 71 per cent of the children assisted were minority children (Appendix 7).

The SCA project targeted three districts of Binh Thuan Province. Within these districts, ten communes were assisted. Five of these were mountainous communes populated by majority ethnic minority communities and five were categorised as poor communes (where per capita monthly income is less than 15 kg of milled rice or 50 000 VND). Overall, the project made a significant contribution in improving the quality of primary education in these communities, particularly in the application of the child-centred active teaching methodology (Appendix 6).

Equally, ADRA's project activities were implemented in poor communities, particularly the ethnic minority groups. The Team was informed that poor communities and the districts where cows were being distributed had more than 30 per cent of the population deemed 'poor' on the Government scale (Appendix 3).

While these projects produced benefits for the poor, they were also effective in providing benefits to the very poor (Chapter 3).

6.3.3 Capacity for innovation

The evaluation found some examples where NGOs had developed innovative approaches that were used to address local problems. Some of the innovations were technical in

nature while others were more in the mobilisation of local community resources to encourage participation and sustainability. The AFAP's Dengue Surveillance and Control project is a good example of the technical innovation that pioneered the use of the naturally occurring organisms (*Mesocyclops*) in water containers to control mosquito larvae. The project was also innovative in its use of collaborators (both men and women) and in the mobilisation of school children to raise awareness of dengue prevention. To ensure sustainability the project is trialing an innovative system of linking community recycling of discarded containers with reduction of small larval habitats to generate on-going income to support implementation costs. The GOV has demonstrated its appreciation of the expertise and the benefits of the project by providing funding from the National Dengue Program to scale up initiatives supported by the project to other communes (Appendix 2).

Similarly, WVA's National Highway One project and CARE's Assertiveness Training project applied some innovative training methods to raise awareness of people in project areas about HIV/AIDS prevention. The WVA project was innovative in its use of mural painting and IEC activities for young girls to raise women's self-esteem and confidence. Such changes in self-esteem apparently promoted women's capacity to take appropriate relationship decisions and to pass on appropriate information about HIV/AIDS to their peers and families. Likewise, the CARE project developed an innovative and culturally sensitive assertiveness training package for women to help fight the spread of HIV/AIDS. The training package recognised that providing information about safe sex practices was not enough and that women needed to have assertiveness skills to apply their knowledge. As noted in Appendix 5, women interviewed advised that the training had improved their self-esteem, and the negotiations skills learned had wider application to other activities in public life.

In general, project experience suggests that Australian NGOs can and do develop innovative approaches that can be piloted and evaluated in small areas for potential replication and expansion in other areas.

6.3.4 Promoting community-to-community links

The promotion of community-to-community links is a major objective of AusAID's NGO Programs and is mentioned in the objective of the NOVA program (Box 1.1). In principle, NGOs have an advantage in this area because of the ethic of voluntarism which they are able to tap into in the Australian communities which they represent (Kershaw 1995).

Almost all NGOs evaluated have strong roots in the Australian community, and are able to attract active members and valuable contributions to their work. As discussed in Chapter 3, most NGOs were working well within established local structures and were strengthening the capacity of local agencies. They have established good partnerships with counterpart organisations and have built links between Vietnam and Australia at the local level.

6.3.5 Cost-effectiveness in aid delivery

Cost-effectiveness is seen as a characteristic of NGOs, but the Team was unable to assess this due to lack of monitoring data.

A number of other evaluations of NGO activities have commented on the cost-effectiveness of NGO projects more generally. For example, Riddell et al (1997) noted that when comments have been made, the dominant view was that for the majority of projects examined, the benefits were deemed to have exceeded costs outlaid. In the Review of the effectiveness of NGO programs, only two out of 25 projects were judged to have produced insufficient benefits in relation to the expenditure outlaid (Kershaw 1995, p. 29).

Some of the studies made comparative comments about NGOs and official aid projects in terms of cost-effectiveness. Overall, the comments were favourable to NGOs, though they tended to focus more on explaining why NGO projects were more cost-effective than on providing evidence to confirm that they were (Riddell et al 1997, p. 25). Some of the characteristics of NGOs that are claimed to contribute to their cost-effectiveness include:

- the ability of NGOs to mobilise voluntary resources both locally and overseas;
- many NGO staff work for salaries which are below those which they might receive for comparable positions in the commercial or government sectors;
- NGO projects are usually smaller in scale and thus less vulnerable to making big mistakes; and
- many NGOs minimise overheads in order to ensure that the maximum amount of donor funds can be applied in the field.

However, in this evaluation some GOV officials raised overhead costs as an issue of some concern during discussions. There was a perception that some NGOs were allocating more funds to project administration than to project activities in the field. The Team discussed the issue of administration costs with NGOs. Some noted that these costs are often determined by the nature of the activity being implemented. For example, some NGOs argued that capital-intensive projects often have low administration costs as a proportion of the total budget because the bulk of expenditure is on technology transfer. Where activities are largely human resource development focused, administration costs are often a higher proportion of budget because of large expert personnel input and the resultant supervision costs.

While the Team was unable to assess these claims because of data and time constraints, it is of the view that to ensure cost-effectiveness, NGOs should pay particular attention to administrative costs in project budgets, including explaining why particular activities have high administration costs.

6.3.6 Findings

The evaluation found that Australian NGOs were making a useful contribution to the development effort in Vietnam. The evaluation highlighted a number of advantages of delivering aid in Vietnam through Australian NGOs:

- they are particularly effective in targeting activities at the community level and in building the capacity of local organisations;
- through their strong poverty focus, they assist some of the most disadvantaged groups, including those in rural, remote and mountainous areas;
- they can develop and pilot innovative projects for potential replication and expansion in other areas; and
- they are well placed to build Australia-Vietnam links at the community level.

However, NGOs could do more to strengthen the links, at the community level, between the people of Australia and Vietnam, including giving projects a strong Australian identity. The Team also felt that NGOs should pay particular attention to administration costs in project budgets, including an explanation as to why particular activities have high administration costs.

PART B

APPENDICES

- A1. APHEDA Workplace Community Health Research and Training Project
- A2. AFAP Community Programs in the Control and Surveillance of Dengue Fever project
- A3. ADRA Cow Banks Phase I Project
- A4. AREA Integrated Community Development Project for the Environs of Ba Vi National Park
- A5. CARE Assertiveness Training for Women for Protection from HIV/AIDs Project
- A6. SCA Binh Thuan Basic Education and Teacher Training Project
- A7. UNICEF Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities and other Disadvantaged Children Project
- A8. World Vision Quang Nam-Da Nang AIDs Education and Awareness Project
- A9. World Vision National Highway One - Developing Community Responses to HIV/AIDs Project
- A10. Evaluation Terms of Reference
- A11. Project Assessment Form

APPENDIX 1: APHEDA WORKPLACE COMMUNITY HEALTH RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROJECT

A1.1 Project background

The Workplace Community Health Research and Training project aimed to develop appropriate strategies to ensure improved workers' occupational health and safety (OHS) conditions at the workplace. This was considered particularly important following Vietnam's move to a market economy and subsequent increased investment in heavy and light industries. The project was managed by the international department of the national office of the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), with two national unions (Light and Heavy industry unions) as key implementing partners. The project was implemented between 1994 and 1996. AusAID contributed \$325 000 to the Australian People for Health, Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA) to support the project through the NOVA program.

A1.2 Achievement of objectives

Project design

The stated aim of the project was to 'assist with the alleviation of poverty of workers by improving workers' and management's knowledge about the health hazards related to the working environment'. The project had three objectives:

- facilitate a research development program in occupational health and safety hazards in 5 line industries of heavy, light, construction, transport and forestry;
- develop a training program for professional health workers and OHS union representatives from industrial sites throughout Vietnam; and
- establish two OHS workers information centres for women.

A1.2.1: Facilitate a research development program in occupational health and safety hazards in 5 line industries of heavy, light, construction, transport and forestry

The project successfully undertook a survey on the working and living conditions of workers and their health condition in two line industries - light and heavy industries.

In discussions with the VGCL, the Team was advised that 45 businesses in the light industry and 37 in the heavy industry sectors participated in the survey. Over 5000 questionnaires were distributed across light and heavy industries. This was the first large-scale survey of OHS in Vietnam. The participatory nature of the research involved the training of hundreds of workplace representatives in health and safety issues from different provinces nationwide. The results from the survey informed the development of the project training activities.

A1.2.2: Develop a training program for professional health workers and OHS union representatives from industrial sites throughout Vietnam

The project was very successful in generating changes in how occupational health and safety issues are dealt with at the workplace. It raised public awareness and increased the concern of a large number of people about issues of labour safety and hygiene, creating a positive impact on employers, workers and trade unions. This was achieved through the training of health workers in occupational health centres, factory medical workers, local medical workers and OHS representatives at the workplace. The Team was informed that more than 400 health workers and over 300 OHS representatives from the heavy industrial sector participated in the training. From the light industry sector, the project training covered over 300 health workers and more than 500 OHS representatives. About 60 per cent of trainees from the heavy industry sector and all trainees from the light industry sector were women.

Training covered areas such as legislation in public health, responsibilities of employers in OHS and in protecting workers' health, first aid and treatment of workplace accidents. It introduced training on labour medicine and industrial hygiene.

According to the VGCL, a number of their members were sent to the Philippines and Australia for study tours to improve their knowledge of other countries' OHS models and regulations. The VGCL felt that these tours provided a useful basis for the extensive in-country training program.

The Team visited one mechanical engineering company and held discussions with factory workers, trade union officials and management. These discussions indicated the nature and extent of change in workers' behaviour at the workplace. Workers on the shop floor and management believe that better professional skills and increased awareness of OHS issues have contributed to reductions of about 75 per cent in workplace accidents since 1996. OHS posters were displayed throughout the work area of the engineering company visited. The Team observed workers using protective gear such as ear plugs and protective clothing. Both male and female workers interviewed could explain OHS issues in relation to their own as well as the company's responsibilities. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to determine how widespread this awareness of OHS issues is in other establishments.

The project also upgraded the testing equipment used to monitor workplace hazards such as dust and noise levels. Discussions with staff at the Occupational and Environmental Health Centre in Hanoi indicated that the equipment was being effectively used and maintained. Staff reported that the new equipment had assisted the Centre in making successful recommendations for the expansion of compensation regulations to cover five new occupational conditions and diseases, including nicotine and insecticide poisoning, silicosis and cotton dust damage and toxic chemicals. However, the Team was informed that the testing equipment is only used to monitor workplace hazards in the public sector.

A1.2.3 Establish two OHS workers information centres for women

One of the key objectives of this project was to provide for two women's health centres, one in Hanoi and one in Ho Chi Minh City. Although time constraints did not permit an evaluation of these centres, it is understood that women workers participated in developing them. The Team was also advised that the centres provide material on a variety of women's health concerns, not just to OHS issues.

A1.2.4 Project monitoring and reporting

The project obtained baseline data through surveys as the basis for training course design. Data collected included attitudes towards workplace safety issues, workplace conditions, income statistics, health statistics and worker aspirations. Trade Union officials conducted the surveys. Data collection included distribution of 8100 survey papers to heavy industry workers and 3000 papers, with 87 questions, to light industry workers. While the evaluation team did not sight survey results, they believed sufficient data was obtained upon which to develop the training courses.

A follow-up survey was not undertaken due to costs involved. However, through anecdotal evidence and comments by representatives at the medical centre and factory visited, it appeared that the training course had contributed to decreased incidence of workplace injuries.

The project had a Steering Group consisting of leaders in the Vietnamese Trade Unions. Six monthly monitoring visits were made by the Australian project manager, and an Australian consultant monitored the training courses. PACCOM also provided monitoring support. Ongoing monitoring of activities supported by the project takes place through training of staff by Trade Union trainers, and workplace meetings to discuss safety issues.

While trainees did not have an opportunity to provide formal feedback during courses, participants were invited to discuss the training at the end of the courses. Trade Union officials meet each year and discussed OHS issues, including project-training activities. Trained staff also have workplace meetings. This contributes to ongoing monitoring and improvement of training activities initiated by the project.

A1.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

The project is judged to be highly sustainable for several reasons. The training provided to workers makes them pay attention to occupational health issues at the workplace. The new skills are constantly being transferred to new employees by project-trained workers. In one enterprise visited the Team was informed that every year since 1997, all workers are required to attend one-day refresher training.

The Team was advised that the testing equipment was being adequately maintained and is likely to be in use for some years to come. However, the long term sustainability of the

equipment will depend on Government funding since there is no strategy in place to cover some of the cost through user charges. The Team was unable to comment on the sustainability of the women's information centres.

Overall, the project appears to have been very successful in achieving its objectives. The project contributed to increasing the awareness of OHS at the workplace. Considerable satisfaction was expressed about project outcomes by both male and female representatives from the light and heavy industry unions as well as the VGCL. Medical personnel at the health centre of the engineering company visited as well as workers reported that no recent accidents had been recorded following the introduction of annual OHS training and retraining. The Team was advised by the VGCL that the project contributed to legislative reform in Vietnam by strengthening Decree Number 13 on Labour Protection. Currently, every state-owned enterprise makes an annual report on the safety of the labour environment. There are now fines for factories that breach standards, and in some cases, factories can even be closed.

A1.4 Project lessons

- Participatory processes, inclusive of both women and men, are important to facilitate appropriate approaches to OHS. Participation is also important in promoting enthusiasm and commitment from trade unions, management and the shopfloor.
- Appropriate OHS training (including refresher courses) for trade union representatives, management and the shop floor, together with the provision of appropriate IEC materials and associated training, can help reduce the likelihood of accidents in the work environment.

APPENDIX 2: AFAP COMMUNITY PROGRAMS IN THE CONTROL AND SURVEILLANCE OF DENGUE FEVER PROJECT

A2.1 Project background

The Dengue Surveillance and Control project is a four year project, which AusAID has supported through the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of the South Pacific (AFAP) since 1995. The overall goal of the project is to 'reduce the incidence of dengue fever in target areas in northern Vietnam'. The project targeted a population of over 49 600 living in 11 600 households in six communes selected from three provinces of Hai Phong, Hung Yen and Nam Dinh.

AusAID contributed \$600 000 to the project through the NOVA program. AFAP in Vietnam is responsible for project implementation in partnership with the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) and the Ministry of Health. A large part of AFAP's input is focused on training to develop local expertise for dengue surveillance and control.

A2.2 Achievement of objectives

Project design

The project aimed to meet the goal of reducing the incidence of dengue fever in target areas through the following components:

Through training the project sought to:

- develop local expertise and leadership for dengue surveillance and control;
- introduce low cost techniques for dengue surveillance and control;
- improve local expertise in clinical and serological surveillance methods; and
- develop a sustainable local capacity to reliably diagnose dengue infection.

Through community programs, the project aimed to:

- implement community based programs based on innovative and low cost techniques for dengue control in the target communities.

Through project management, the project sought to:

- provide effective project management and support services to ensure adequate communication between and coordination of project staff and timely implementation of activities.

Overall the design presented a clear set of objectives and activities that might reasonably have been expected to lead to achievement of those objectives.

A2.2.1 Develop local expertise and leadership for dengue surveillance and control

The project was outstandingly successful in strengthening the organisational and technical capacity of the implementing agency, NIHE, which now plays a pivotal role in the National Dengue Program. The Team was informed that in recognition of NIHE's expertise, the joint project manager of the dengue surveillance and control project was appointed as the vice chairman of the national committee to manage the National Dengue Program, with two other NIHE staff as committee members.

Staff of NIHE interviewed reported that they had provided training to many provincial, district and commune health workers, local authorities and health volunteers in dengue surveillance and control and dengue diagnosis and reporting. The Team witnessed one training workshop attended by 18 key health staff from the provincial and district levels who will effectively be team leaders in their locations. Discussions with some of them indicated that project training was very effective and appropriate for their work. They displayed a very high level of understanding necessary for sustained dengue surveillance and control. As a result of such training, a strong working relationship has developed between NIHE, the Ministry of Health and local authorities. The Team visited a number of communes and noted strong support and cooperation shown at project sites from province, district and commune level authorities.

A2.2.2 Introduce low cost techniques for dengue surveillance and control

Discussions with project staff indicated that their methodologies for dengue control are low cost per beneficiary because Mesocyclops are naturally occurring organisms and the strategy focuses on transferring them to water containers to control mosquito larvae. To date, about 12 000 households in the project area have been inoculated with Mesocyclops. The Team was informed that the 1998 dengue season was Vietnam's worst with 234 000 cases of dengue and dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF). However, project villages recorded only 35 cases, significantly lower than the number in surrounding communes.

The use of health volunteers, school children and community leaders in raising awareness of dengue prevention has contributed to lowering the cost of implementation. However, the project has also recruited and trained about 130 collaborators who make personal visits to households to monitor mosquito levels and educate residents on a monthly basis. Each collaborator receive an incentive payment from the project of about 60 000 VND per month. Uncertainty of maintaining these payments to collaborators raises some concerns about the sustainability of these activities after project completion.

However, the project appears to be considering alternative ways of raising funds to support project activities. For example, in one district of Hung Yen the project is trialing an innovative system of linking community recycling of discarded containers with reduction of small larval habitats, to generate ongoing income to support implementation

costs. However, its wider applicability to other project areas is not clear. The project has also put forward a proposal to local authorities to use funds from other projects such as the Safe Water Project to subsidise project activities.

A2.2.3 Improve local expertise in clinical and serological surveillance methods

The Team saw forms used by health centres to diagnose dengue and was informed about the training of doctors to identify dengue, in the context of the National Dengue Program. The Team felt it did not have the necessary expertise or time to appropriately analyse records relating to training in serological techniques. Students, however, believe that they have improved their expertise.

A2.2.4 Develop a sustainable local capacity to reliably diagnose dengue infection

Again, the Team felt it did not have the necessary expertise to assess the achievement of this objective. However in discussions, project staff commented on upgraded kits for the diagnosis of dengue infection and the distribution of these to provincial laboratories. These kits are said to improve the reliability of test results. Project staff advised that diagnostic workshops were held for provincial laboratory staff to improve their expertise in the diagnosis of serum samples.

A2.2.5 Implement community based programs based on innovative and low cost techniques for dengue control in the target communities

The project was outstandingly successful in combining the use of biological control (introduction of Mesocyclops in household water containers), training of health workers, cleanup campaigns, community and school education, and household visits by collaborators to reduce mosquito larva numbers in project sites.

The project was very effective in using existing political and mass organisation structures to achieve its dengue surveillance objective. Use of both men and collaborators has proved a very effective mechanism to promote household stagnant water clean-up campaigns around housing areas. These collaborators hold leadership positions in their communities and have achieved considerable status as a result of the success of project activities. The Team was advised that 130 collaborators have made over 133 000 person contacts to monitor mosquito levels and educate residents on a monthly basis. Over 70 community education and awareness meetings have been held with an average attendance of 170 villagers.

Mobilization of school children to control dengue has proved very effective. Besides, their attitudes and actions shaped by the project will have a profound effect on dengue control in the future. The team was informed that 27 clean-up campaigns involving over 4600 school children and 283 teachers have resulted in the collection of 25 000 kg of discards.

Quiz nights organised for school children and school drama plays about dengue mosquito are said to have proved highly effective in the diffusion of information. The project also used mass media, IEC materials such as posters, and group discussions to good effect.

A2.2.6 Provide effective project management and support services

The project experienced management problems during its early stages that effectively delayed the project for about one year. These problems appear to have been caused by lack of communication and cooperation between project staff and local authorities. With a change in project management and an agreement on project implementation arrangements, relations between stakeholders improved. Since then, a strong working relationship has developed between AFAP and NIHE. The project adopted a participatory approach involving local authorities and mass organisations in the implementation of its activities. This appears to be a major contributing factor in the success of the project.

A2.2.7 Project monitoring and reporting

Baseline data was collected at project outset to compare levels of mosquito larvae in control and trial communes. While this ultimately provided a basis for assessment of project success, it was acknowledged that the control commune was aware of the use of mesocyclops in the trial villages, and sought to emulate the test without project support. This may have affected the final survey results. However, the results were supportable enough to be presented in scientific journals and to scientific peers.

The Preventative Medicine Centre (PMC) is responsible for monitoring project performance. Collaborators trained to assess mosquito larvae/mesocyclops levels meet with the PMC on a monthly basis to draw up forward workplans. Through observation of project activities and small group discussions with collaborators, the Team was satisfied that the collaborators could identify the larvae, and understood the reasons and methods for testing. The Team was also advised that project staff assess a random sample of households to determine the reliability of the collaborators' reporting and the records held by the PMC.

Monthly meetings with the PMC and the development of workplans provide collaborators with opportunities for feedback on the performance of the activities. The Team felt that feedback is vital in such a project, as the collaborators need to be made aware of larvae level trends in local and neighbouring areas.

A2.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

The sustainability of project activities is likely to be very high. The project was very effective in working with, and strengthening the capacity of, local government agencies and local authorities. The institutional arrangements put in place during project implementation have resulted in significant strengthening of NIHE. Moreover, NIHE

has established linkages with agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the Pasteur Institute and now plays a pivotal role in the National Dengue Program. The Team was advised that NIHE's expertise was recognised by the provision of funds from the National Dengue Program for expansion of project activities to other communes starting in 1999.

A related factor is the project's training activities that have contributed to developing the skills and capacity of national, provincial and local staff in dengue surveillance and control. The skills are being transferred more widely to other health workers at the community level.

Of more significance is the fact that the main control measure is naturally occurring Mesocyclops that cost nothing. As discussed previously, the use of health volunteers, school children and community leaders in raising awareness of dengue prevention means that this strategy can be maintained at lower cost. However, the area in which sustainability is likely to be of some concern relates to incentive payments to collaborators, although the project is trialing some innovative income generating approaches to enhance chances of sustainability.

A2.4 Project lessons

Project design and participation

- This project provides a good example of clear project design with appropriate, achievable and measurable objectives which are essential for effective project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Although the initial project design did not involve input from the community, once the feasibility of the project had been established, the commune leaders mobilised the community to undertake project activities. Mass campaigns, using multiple approaches were very effective in controlling mosquito larvae. The use of mass organizations such as the Women's Union and the Youth Union are essential. Involvement of schools can generate enthusiasm and involvement of communities and has the potential for generating novel IEC ideas, like plays.

Institutional capacity building

- The project success was in a large part due to the fact that the project was implemented through a local agency and used existing political structures and mass organisations. Capacity building at all levels is essential for the success of such a project. Moreover, activities that link in with government programs such as the National Dengue Program are more likely to be sustainable after project completion.

Sustainability

- NGOs have smaller budgets but sometimes do innovative projects that require continued funding to support follow-up activities. Most projects implemented in poor areas have great difficulty in finding a means of being self-financing. Nevertheless, even if financial sustainability may be difficult to

achieve, NGOs should from the outset consider how they are going to address the issues of financing the sustainability of innovative activities they initiate. For example, this project has sought to improve chances of sustainability through linking community recycling of discarded containers with reduction of small larval habitats to generate ongoing income to support implementation costs and proposals to local authorities to use funds from other income-generating projects to cross-subsidise project activities.

APPENDIX 3: ADRA COW BANKS PHASE 1 PROJECT

A3.1 Project background

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) implemented two cow bank projects in Vietnam from 1991 to 1996 in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) and with funding from ADRA Sweden and ADRA's local partners. ADRA Australia obtained AusAID support (\$52 500) through the ANCP to help fund the third cow bank project in Hoa Binh Province, building on lessons learned from the previous projects. Since the completion of this project in June 1997, ADRA Australia has implemented further cow bank projects with AusAID assistance. ADRA in Vietnam is working with MOLISA at both national and provincial levels to ensure the success of the project.

The project aimed to provide poor families with opportunities to increase their income and living standards, gradually eradicating hunger and poverty, by loaning the families cows to rear and develop their own herds. The main objective of the project was to:

- help a minimum of 300 ethnic minority households in Hoa Binh Province to increase their income through the establishment of cow banks in selected communities in 1996-97.

Project inputs included technical assistance for the establishment of management structures, finance for the purchase of breeding cattle, education in money management and income generation and the provision of monitoring and evaluation by trained staff.

A3.2 Achievement of objectives

Project design

This project was prepared with the benefit of some years of experience in two other similar projects. The project design was presented concisely in logframe format with one objective and a clear set of activities and expected outputs.

The project design is consistent with GOV efforts of promoting activities that will assist in eliminating poverty, especially in rural areas where poverty is high. For example, in Da Bac District (one of districts in the project area) 16 communes are included on the national list of the poorest 1000 communes.

A3.2.1 Help a minimum of 300 ethnic minority households in Hoa Binh Province to increase their income through the establishment of cow banks in selected communities

The objective of the project was to purchase 300 cows and loan them to 300 poor households. Special attention was to be given to families where the head of the household is a woman or is disabled. The project was effective in achieving its objective.

The project purchased and loaned 225 cows to clients or 75 per cent of the planned 300 cows (Table A3.1). Fewer cows were purchased as planned because during project implementation no maximum expenditure limit was set on the cost of each cow. This situation was later remedied but little funds remained to purchase more cows.

TABLE A3.1: COW BANK PHASE 1 PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS, 1996-97

Items	Project target	Actual achievements
Number of cows distributed to clients	300	225
Number of client household at starting period	225	na
Number of calves loaned to other clients	na	51
Number of calves available at the cow bank	na	119
Number of client household at present	na	276

Source: Project staff.

The Team was advised that almost all cows purchased were healthy and the death rate was low. Only 8 cows had died since the project started. The number of households benefiting from the project has increased by about 23 per cent since the project started. The project has distributed 51 of the 170 calves born from the original stock.

The first-phase client farmers appeared to have received effective training in health, feeding and general caring for cows. However, second phase beneficiaries interviewed claimed that they had not received any training. Nonetheless, they seem to have acquired cow rearing skills from observing and talking to their neighbours. No sex disaggregated data was available on training to assess women's involvement in training. The team was advised that both men and women were involved.

Farmers interviewed noted that training could have been improved by spending more time on practical rather than theoretical aspects. They also indicated a desire for IEC materials to be supplied early in the project to support the training. While sophisticated glossy colour IEC materials had been provided for the project, their relevance to villagers could not be ascertained. These materials were only available two years after the completion of the project.

The project was effective in working with existing local structures and institutions. Farmers can access extension services if required, in addition to the twice yearly vaccination program. Some farmers are willing to pay for the services of private paravets.

A3.2.2 Poverty focus

It was clear that project activities were implemented in poor communities, particularly the ethnic minority groups. For example, the Team was informed that the beneficiaries of An Nghia Commune, Lac Son District are all of the Muong ethnic group. It was reported that of the 1167 households in this commune, 38 per cent (428 households) were considered to be poor. (People are categorised as poor when their per capita monthly income is less than 15 kg of milled rice or 50 000 VND). At the time of the evaluation, 82 households in this commune were participating in the project. Beneficiaries in Toan Son and Da Bac town in Da Bac District were from the Muong, Tay and Dao ethnic groups who were relocated to this area because of the hydro-electric scheme.

People in these communes derive their income from growing rice, maize, cassava and sweet potatoes. However, farmers commented that they lacked enough land to make all ends meet. Many said that on average they lacked food for home consumption for 2-3 months of the year.

The Team observed that while the project obviously targeted poor communities and the districts where cows were being distributed had more than 30 per cent of the population deemed 'poor' on the Government scale, some not so poor farmers also benefit.

While the project aimed to include poor women it was hampered by lack of baseline data on gender division of labour or the gender profile on access to and control over resources. Notwithstanding the apparent lack of gender sensitive approaches to baseline information, this project appeared to have benefited women and their families (see below).

A3.2.3 Project benefits

Cow banks are rather slow to bring about results and it will be several years before families can derive maximum benefits from the project. That said, it is possible to detect some benefits on farm family incomes and living standards. The Evaluation Team assessed project benefits in terms of short term and long term benefits.

Short term benefits

The project has gradually changed the pattern of household agricultural production. For many farmers, the project provided them the first opportunity to include cows in their farming systems.

Farm families reported that the project was responsible for an increase in rice production. This increase was attributed to the use of manure in their rice fields. The Team was advised that dung produced by one cow in a year can produce between 1-2 tonnes of compost, which can increase rice production by 100-200 kg of paddy rice per household per crop. All the increase in production is used for family consumption, contributing to reducing food shortage. Non-project villagers visited reported that their rice production had not changed much during the same period.

The Team estimated that a household with one cow can save 120 000-200 000 VND in fertiliser purchase. Some farmers interviewed said that they also used the cow for ploughing rice fields which saves some household labour.

Through participating in project activities, both men and women appear to have gained experience in planning their agricultural activities. Project activities have been an important avenue along which women have passed towards participation in local development.

Long term benefits

It is not possible to assess the long term impact of the project on family incomes or food security with available data. However, clients suggested that receiving a cow, when they never imagined they could ever afford one, is a major boost to their future family income situation. A cow belongs to the household once the client has paid back a calf to the bank. It is seen as a tangible asset that can be used to build a herd.

Some suggested that funds accruing from the sale of calves, or the use of a cow as collateral, could enable farmers to repair houses, educate their children, provide more and better food for household consumption and improve lifestyle.

Importantly, the number of clients is likely to continue increasing in the future phases of the project as calves are paid back to the bank and distributed. Thus the project has the potential to help alleviate poverty in the project area.

A3.2.4 Project monitoring and reporting

The Team felt that the project design lacked sufficient baseline data that could be used to assess increased income levels amongst project beneficiaries. Nevertheless, through interviews with beneficiaries, the Team established that some baseline data was available. While the Team could not be entirely confident with reconstructed baseline data obtained through interviews with beneficiary households (approximately 20 households surveyed), indications were that cow ownership contributed to increased rice yields and reduced labour costs (ie. through manure for compost making and ploughing). It was too early to make any assessments about improved income levels through sale of cattle.

The Commune Project Committees (CPCs) are responsible for monitoring the cow bank. By collecting data from beneficiaries about births and sales, they keep track of cattle costs and ownership. It is also possible to compare progress of the cow banks amongst different communes. However, the monitoring data does not appear to address the achievement of objectives as stated in the project. For example, while the Team was aware of the benefits of owning a cow, as established through interviews, actual changes in income were not recorded in project monitoring reports. It is possible, however, that some change in income levels may be assessed through normal commune or district level reports.

As the project generally involved one-way communication, that is, the CPCs only collect information about the project cattle, and little, if any, training is being undertaken, the Team found it difficult to verify the quality of the monitoring data being reported. That is, it was not established whether cows were being targeted at the right people, whether beneficiaries fully understood and could employ the benefits of composting and animal ploughing, and whether they could manage the increased incomes effectively.

A3.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

Overall sustainability is judged to be good from most perspectives of the project.

From an institutional perspective, the project management committees at different levels worked with local administrative organisations during project implementation. The project was successful in involving local government agencies such as the agricultural and forestry extension services. These organisations consider the project as part of their own program and are willing to assist farmers obtain needed extension services. This involvement is likely to sustain project activities.

An administrative fee of not less than 50 000 VND per cow is paid by clients when they repay their loan. This is a minimum suggested by the project. This money is allocated to the Provincial, District and Commune Project Management Committees to cover the cost of administering the program. ADRA in Vietnam advised that most project sites have chosen to charge between 70 000 and 100 000 VND to ensure the provision of the same level of service as during project implementation.

From interviews with project beneficiaries it appears that insufficient attention was given to the carrying capacity of the land in sustaining increasing numbers of cows. Currently, there appears to be enough feed for the existing number of cows. Animals are grazed on common property areas, roadside verges, dikes, rice straw and cut green material. A recent evaluation of ADRA Vietnam Cow Bank Program commented that some clients were experiencing increasing pressure to find adequate feed, particularly in hilly areas during the dry season, where clients have to graze livestock further up the mountains. It noted that if left unchecked, this could hasten the degradation and erosion of these mountainous assets and compromise project sustainability (ADRA 1999, p. 20).

A3.4 Project lessons

Project design

- Baseline information on communities is essential before detailed project planning can be commenced. Such information should be disaggregated by gender to facilitate appropriate planning. Gender analysis should be undertaken of all communities, where activities are planned, so that community processes are understood and appropriate interventions are planned to maximize development impact.

Training

- Training should be participatory and gender sensitive. IEC materials should be developed in a participatory fashion and available early in the project if they are to have an impact on project outcomes.

Sustainability

- For livestock projects, potential environmental impacts need to be assessed as part of project design. Strategies to minimise adverse environmental effects should be developed as part of the participatory process to enhance more balanced and sustainable development outcomes.

APPENDIX 4: AREA INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR THE ENVIRONS OF BA VI NATIONAL PARK

A4.1 Project background

The Integrated Community Development Project for the Environs of Ba Vi National Park is a large project which began in 1994 and was completed in 1999. AusAID contributed about A\$1.1 million to the project through the NOVA and ANCP programs. The project was implemented by the Association for Research and Environmental Aid (AREA) and the Centre for Natural Resources and Environmental Studies (CRES) within and around the buffer zone of Ba Vi National Park (BVNP) in Ba Vi District. The project area is populated by a mix of ethnic groups, with the Kinh, Muong and Dao being the predominant groups. The project addressed a wide range of development constraints in order to reduce the human pressure on the National Park.

According to the project design document (PDD), the overall goal of the project was ‘to improve the quality of life of the people in the project area by promoting sustainable economic and social development based on sound ecological principles and practices’ (AREA 1993). To achieve this goal, the project had the following specific objectives:

- enhancing food and economic security from agricultural and other economic activities within the capacity of the environment to support such activities by increasing domestic production, improving economic return on crop and aquaculture output, particularly for women, encouraging agricultural and aquacultural species diversification, promoting a range of ecologically sustainable management regimes, and eliminating waste associated with current practices of drying produce from agricultural fields and home garden;
- reducing the human pressure on Ba Vi National Park so as to: protect soil stability and fertility in the area; support and enhance those essential ecological processes that sustain hydrological systems and wildlife habitats; and preserve and enhance the biodiversity of flora/fauna species found in and around the BVNP;
- improving community health, decreasing biomass consumption, increasing the availability of organic agricultural inputs and enhancing the manufacturing skills of local tradespeople and increasing their business opportunities by developing, trialing and promoting a range of affordable and culturally-appropriate passive solar food dryers and fuel-efficient energy conversions systems;
- reducing the workload of women and ensuring that the project is of benefit to and meets the needs of the whole community by including a program of project participation for women;

- establishing a revolving fund to assist women, subsistence and low-income farmers and as well as tradespeople to increase their income-generating capacity by capitalising on project initiatives;
- extending the skills and environmental management practices of local communities suited to the local context and strengthening the technical capacity of those Vietnamese institutions/organisations involved in environmental protection management and ecologically-sustainable development; and
- monitoring and evaluating the environmental, social, cultural and economic impact of project activities and utilising the data to adjust project output and redefine its direction if necessary.

In order to meet the project goal and the specific objectives, project activities were divided into the following broad components:

- project establishment;
- pre-field activities;
- field activities:
- agricultural and aquacultural development;
- food preparation and processing;
- social credit income generating scheme;
- technical assistance and environmental awareness; and
- project planning, monitoring and evaluation.

It was anticipated in the PDD that a population of approximately 50 000 to 60 000 would indirectly benefit from project activities over the four years of the project. In the last two years of the project a separate project - the Medicinal Plants project - was incorporated into the Integrated Community Development project. Project design was also later varied to exclude the social credit income-generating scheme. This was replaced with additional farmer training programs.

A4.2 Achievement of objectives

A4.2.1: Enhancing food and economic security from agricultural and other economic activities within the capacity of the environment to support such activities by increasing domestic production, improving economic return on crop and aquaculture output, particularly for women, encouraging agricultural and aquacultural species diversification, promoting a range of ecologically sustainable management regimes, and eliminating waste associated with current practices of drying produce from agricultural fields and home garden

The project sought to achieve this broad objective through: increasing the productive capacity of existing agricultural land and aquacultural systems; sale of surplus produce after subsistence needs have been met; encouraging species diversification and better crop selection based on prevailing environmental conditions and market analysis; and eliminating spoilage of food crops and other species. Considerable economic gains were expected through: reduced costs associated with the collection and/or purchase of fuelwood, fodder and other forest products; increased availability of organic inputs and reduced use of chemical inputs; and significant reductions in fuelwood usage and the time taken to collect fuel and dry food and other produce (AREA 1993, p. 8).

AREA undertook considerable applied research throughout the project cycle to support the establishment of agricultural (rice, winter corn, and green and soy bean) and fish production experimental demonstration trials. Agricultural and fish demonstration trials commenced in early 1997 and were still continuing at project completion in March 1999.

Fish experimental demonstration trials

The project selected 12 fish farming ponds, which formed the basis of the fish demonstration trials. A total of 32 farming households (or 6 per cent of household with ponds in the project area in 1996-97) received direct project training and assistance with fish production - 16 per season over two growing seasons. During field discussions, the Team was informed that of the 16 farming households selected for trials in the first year, four were women-headed households.

Selected farmers received formal follow-up training and on-site technical assistance for one season. The project provided free fingerlings to selected farm households to support first year trials. The PCR reported fish production increases of between 60 per cent and 150 per cent in the demonstration trial ponds (AREA 1999a). AREA reported that all selected farmers continued to maintain these production levels after project technical assistance ceased.

The PCR commented on the uncertainty in the continued availability of suitable high quality fingerlings for the aquaculture component in the local area, which would make the most suitable use of farmers' ponds (both economically and environmentally). This problem was addressed during implementation by obtaining high quality fingerlings from the Aquacultural Research Institute No. 1 in Hanoi at cost to farmers. However, the project was uncertain as to how this can be continued in the future. AREA advised that high quality stock was one of several interrelated elements that lead to increased fish production, and other elements include correct stocking densities, species selection and feeding regimes, oxygenation of ponds, erosion prevention and adequate light. It noted that high productivity levels were being achieved despite the limited availability of suitable fingerlings.

From field discussions with farmers and commune leaders it was evident that increased fish production occurred in experimental demonstration ponds. This would be expected given the improved stock used and the considerable on-site research and technical assistance and support provided to participating farmers. The contribution of the aquaculture component to enhancing economic and food security in the project area will occur through wider adoption of project-initiated fish production techniques. AREA advised that fish production techniques had extended to 289 households with nominal project support, and that its random assessment of these ponds shows that production increases were similar to those achieved in the experimental demonstration trial ponds. This suggests that increases in production in non-assisted ponds that were similar to those achieved in experimental ponds occurred without the considerable on-site research and technical assistance and support. AREA claimed that altogether about 1600 individuals benefited from the aquaculture activities. The Team was unable to verify these reported achievements in fish production because of marked inconsistencies in project data and inconsistencies between project data and fish production data from the communes.

AREA reported that the project did not encourage fish production activities among poorer farmers because they had no disposable income to cover the risk of loss of stock from theft, lack of water during drought, heavy metal and pesticide poisoning caused by agricultural runoff, and lack of available biomass for feed. Rather the project assisted farmers with existing systems to improve their output and to reduce the potential for negative environmental impacts.

Agricultural experimental demonstration trials

The agricultural component was a major focus of the project. The project undertook demonstration trials in rice, winter corn, green and soy bean production and dryland farming on sloping land.

The PCR reported that 74 farmers throughout the project area participated in demonstration trials for spring and autumn rice crops using pest, disease and drought resistant older varieties. Respectively 39 and 19 trials of green and soy bean were conducted in two communes. 107 farmers in three communes undertook winter corn trials as a third crop in areas where corn was not previously grown.

The PCR reported significant increases in crop yields with above average production of green and soy bean resulting in locations not previously producing these crops (Table A4.1). For example, rice production on demonstration sites increased from an average of about 3000 tonnes/ha to 4600 tonnes/ha, an increase of 53 per cent. Winter corn production increased from 0.23 tonnes/ha to 5579 tonnes/ha, an increase of 2325 per cent.

TABLE A4.1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT DATA ON INCREASES IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Activity	No. of trials	Trial area (m ²)	Total yield trial area (kg)		Production increase (%)
			Trial	Control	
Rice production	74	101 443	46 656	30 404	53
Corn production	107	99 538	55 530	2 290	2 325
Soy bean	39	29 204	5 229	2 907	80
Green bean	19	27 360	5 785	78	7 317
Seed rice production	71	78 982	1 017	-	-

Source: AREA project data

From discussions with farmers who participated in earlier rice trials, it was evident that increased production had occurred on these demonstration sites, although they could not confirm the extent of the reported increases. Recent participants such those in Bon Hamlet were unable to assess the impact of the trials as they had only recently commenced.

As with fish demonstration trials, increased production would be expected from agricultural demonstration trials given the improved seeds used and the considerable on-site research and technical assistance and support provided to participating farmers. The issue is the extent to which project-initiated techniques had extended beyond the demonstration trials and their impact on enhancing economic and food security in the project area.

During field discussions with project staff and commune leaders the Team was informed that the adoption of project-initiated techniques was happening, although no data was provided to support this observation¹⁰. The PCR provided data which showed that about 3300 farmers had adopted new agricultural production techniques for rice, corn, soy and green bean with nominal project support, benefiting over 18 000 individuals. AREA noted that its observations and qualitative assessments indicate that these farmers were achieving production increases similar to those achieved at demonstration sites.

¹⁰ AREA stated that it has never been advised by AusAID that extension figures were required to be reported

Due to time constraints, the Team was unable to verify the reported extension of project-initiated agricultural activities, nor the productivity increases attributable to project initiatives. However, AREA advised that agricultural activities were concentrated mainly in 4 communes of Ba Trai, Ba Vi, Tan Linh and Van Hoa with 5436 households. The reported number of households applying project-initiated techniques represents 55 per cent of total households in the four communes. To the extent that these farmers were achieving production increases similar to those achieved at demonstration sites, these increases would be reflected in average agricultural production figures from the four communes.

Table A4.2 shows commune data on changes in rice yields in the project area from 1996-97 to 1998-99. There are marked inconsistencies between project data and agricultural production data from the communes, with commune data showing much lower crop output figures. While there is a tendency in communes to under-report rice production, this under-reporting would apply to all communes. The data indicates increases in rice yields in the targeted communes of Ba Trai Tan Linh and Van Hoa, with on change in Ba Vi. However, the data also shows rice yield increases in the three communes of Minh Quang, Yen Bai and Khanh Thuong that the project did not target. Indeed, the non-targeted commune of Yen Bai achieved the highest percentage increase in rice yield during the period. This data indicates the difficulty of attributing increases in agricultural production to project initiatives.

TABLE A4.2: RICE OUTPUT IN BA VI NATIONAL PARK BUFFER ZONE COMMUNES

Commune	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	% change between
	Tonnes/ha			1996-97 and 1998-99
				Per cent
Ba Trai	1.9	2.4	3.3	74
Ba Vi	2.0	1.4	2.0	0
Tan Linh	1.8	2.1	3.2	78
Minh Quang	1.7	1.4	2.7	59
Van Hoa	1.9	2.4	3.2	41
Yen Bai	1.6	1.9	3.0	88
Khanh Thuong	1.8	1.3	2.9	61

Source: Data from communes provided by AREA

From field observation and discussions with farmers, it appeared that most of the households participating in demonstration trials were relatively well-off. AREA explained that one third of farmers participating in demonstration trials were selected by the hamlet leader, one third were selected by farmers themselves, while the remaining third were

selected by project staff. The latter ensured that at least 20 per cent of households were poorer farmers. AREA commented that targeting risk averse poorer farmers can be difficult in the current economic and socio-political climate, and the project relied on the diffusion principle to spread new techniques to poorer and surrounding farmers that the project did not specifically target (AREA 1999b, p. 4).

Many farmers interviewed expressed particular interest in cultivating fruit trees such as lychees in their home garden. Some claimed that home gardens provide more income to families than rice production. The project established a nursery to propagate better quality fruit trees seedlings, including lychees, grapefruit, longan, apricot, lemon, papaya, custard apple, sapote, persimmon and Vietnamese apple. AREA reported that during the course of the project, more than 1300 fruit tree seedlings were propagated and distributed to farmers by the project directly from its nursery. The Evaluation Team was advised that grafted root stock were being maintained in the project nursery for up to 15 months before they could be distributed, and a large number of grafted root stock was not ready for transplanting at the time of the evaluation. Recent data indicates that 6624 seedlings and root stock were distributed from the project nursery. The Team was also informed that a further three nurseries were set up in three Communes in response to increased demand for fruit trees, and these distributed 1890 seedlings to farmers. Three households were trained in nursery production techniques, maintenance and care. The nurseries were also used as formal and informal training venues.

Fruit trees have the potential to provide households with an additional source of income. This is reflected in local farmers' demand for fruit tree seedlings. However, at the time of the evaluation the Team felt that the number of seedlings produced and distributed to farmers was not sufficient to have any measurable impact on the economic conditions of people in the project area, and an expansion of these activities would be required to meet farmer demand. In response, AREA stated that its project monitoring indicated that in the communes where the nurseries were established future demand would be met and that fruit tree production was on the increase in the project area as a result of project activities.

The project also sought to enhance food and economic security by: eliminating waste associated with current practices of drying produce from agricultural fields and home gardens; and by reducing fuelwood usage. The extent to which these objectives were achieved is discussed in sections A4.2.2 and A4.2.3.

The project appears to have provided appropriate training to participating farmers. Farmer training commenced in late 1996 and covered modules such as basic ecology, aquaculture production, pest and disease management, seed selection, sloping land agriculture, and economic management for farming households. At the time of the evaluation, the project had conducted 38 separate training courses. AREA advised that over 1000 participants were involved in the various courses conducted by the project. It noted that due to high demand, the project has conducted a further 6 training courses involving 189 participants since AusAID's involvement in the project ceased.

Training in integrated pest management (IPM) and rice production techniques such as seedbed preparation and rice seed selection was considered by participating farmers as beneficial. Practical training, especially on agricultural and aquacultural production was given much attention by the project. Indeed, farmers in Cam Phuong hamlet advised that they preferred the project training activities to all other project activities. They undertook 4 days of training in theoretical aspects and 3 days practical training in the field. They indicated that they had reduced the number of pesticide spraying of rice crops from 3-4 times to 2-3 times a crop. They attributed this change to IPM training. AREA advised that there has been an overall reduction of 51 per cent in pesticide usage at demonstration trial sites. Women were included in the training program. The Team was informed of one IPM and rice production practical training course that was attended by 8 women and 14 men. AREA advised that altogether 389 females and 707 males participated in training courses.

A4.2.2: Reducing the human pressure on Ba Vi National Park so as to: protect soil stability and fertility in the area; support and enhance those essential ecological processes that sustain hydrological systems and wildlife habitats; and preserve and enhance the biodiversity of flora/fauna species found in and around the BVNP

The project conducted considerable research in the National Park and buffer zone to identify medicinal plant species and to understand species diversification and the ecology within which medicinal plants grow. The objective was to use the knowledge to grow medicinal plants in agricultural systems, particularly in home gardens, and to propagate the plants in nurseries for distribution to herbalists and interested farmers to grow, thus reducing the pressure on the Park.

Before it was incorporated into the Integrated Community Development project, the Medicinal Plants project undertook 126 transect surveys in the National Park to determine the distribution, abundance and ecology of medicinally important species growing within the Park. These transects have been resurveyed twice and spot checked on two other occasions during the Integrated Community Development project. Over 300 species of medicinal plants were identified, and of these, 44 were considered by local herbalists to be of economic or medicinal importance. Local herbalists participated in the survey and contributed to project information. AREA's research found that some species were likely to become locally extinct. One of the aims of the project was to reverse this trend by establishing nurseries to propagate rare, endangered, and vulnerable species as well as those species considered economically important.

By project completion, the project had established 4 medicinal plant nurseries to provide participating farmers with propagating material, training and technical assistance. The PCR reported that the project propagated about 6833 seedlings with 1824 seedlings being used by nurseries as propagation material and 5009 distributed to herbalists and

farmers. AREA advised that because some rare and economically important species proved difficult to propagate, additional assistance would be sought from Sydney's Royal Botanical Gardens if the project is to progress to another phase.

The Team visited a number of households participating in the medicinal plant trial as well as households not involved in the trial to gain their views on project activities. It was evident from observations and discussions with herbalists and farmers in those sites visited by the Team that actual trials in home gardens had only recently begun, and farmers were unsure of the contribution of medicinal plant component to reducing human pressure on the National Park. The Team was unable to visit other sites that participated in earlier trials due to time constraints. AREA advised that the medicinal plant trials commenced under Medicinal Plant Project in 1995, and trial plantings and distribution continued from 1996 under the Integrated Community Development Project. The PCR reported thirty six herbalists directly participated in medicinal plant trials, while more than 200 herbalists and farmers were indirectly involved in the project and many of them were now growing medicinal plants in their home gardens.

The project also developed and distributed passive solar driers to medicinal plant farmers. This component sought to eliminate wastage associated with traditional practices of open medicinal plant drying. During field discussions, the Team was informed that a total of 14 solar driers were distributed by the project to herbalists for testing, and all are still in use. In response to the revised draft report, AREA reported that the 20 metal workers who were trained in design, construction and maintenance of project-designed solar dryers produced 60 units without direct project assistance and sold them to farmers. The project conducted random checks on 27 of these units and found them to be of high standard.

During field discussions, one of the herbalists trialing these driers and other non-participating farmers were unsure about the economic, environmental and health benefits espoused by the project. They suggested that the units were only suited to drying very small volumes, with the bulk of the medicinal plant material still being dried using traditional methods. Discussions also indicated that the units were not considered cost-effective given the limited amount of plant material they can handle.

In response to the draft report, AREA disputed these observations and cited the efficiency benefits and capabilities of these units, including:

- the units had reduced drying times from between 80 per cent to 200 per cent, while the loss of base material due to mould attack and other humidity related problems was decreased by 40 per cent (This translates to a herbalist being able to dry up to 70 kg of medicinal material in a seven day period);
- the units produce a higher quality product than the traditional method of open drying; remain operationally efficient over a wide temperature range and require little attention during the drying process, thereby reducing the workload of women;

- locally available materials were used to manufacture units and designs were kept within an affordable price range. AREA determined that an average payback period per unit is 24 weeks. (The driers cost between 100 000 VND for less efficient units and 300 000 VND for more efficient units); and
- there is a 30 per cent improvement in the market value of materials dried in the units over materials dried using traditional methods (AREA 1999b).

The Team does not question the drying efficiency of these units nor their affordability by local farmers. The concern is whether these units are appropriate to overcome what the project perceives to be inefficiencies and health risks associated with the traditional method of open drying as referred to in the PDD (see AREA 1993, pp. 13-14). The appropriateness of the units can be gauged by the extensiveness of their adoption by local farmers. AREA advised that the project's outreach was not extensive as anticipated with only 74 units distributed. It argued that units will become more widespread in the future as their advantages become widely recognised. From field observation of one of the units (that was similar to other units), the Team felt that these units are not appropriate for drying produce from agricultural fields and home gardens. The project had considered larger units for drying large volume crops such as cassava but determined that their cost-effectiveness would not warrant their use for such low-value crops.

The project also established agricultural demonstration trials on sloping land, during the last 18 months of the project, to demonstrate appropriate methods of reducing soil erosion and improving soil fertility. The objective was to train farmers leasing steep land within and adjacent to the National Park to undertake environmentally sustainable rainfed agricultural practices. Nine dryland agricultural trials on sloping land were undertaken. The PCR reported that sloping land agricultural activities were extended to an additional 36 farming households. The Team visited two project trial sites. From discussions with farmers, it appeared that the project provided appropriate training in soil conservation techniques, and distributed legume seeds (about 4 kg each) to farmers for trialing. The PCR reported that the success of the trials was mixed, mostly owing to unseasonably severe drought conditions. That said, the PCR noted that 12.7 tonnes or 454 kg/ha of green manure was produced at the nine project trial sites for use as organic soil input. AREA also noted that the problems associated with allowing cultivation on steep slopes within the National Park only emerged towards the end of the project, and lack of time and resources precluded this component from receiving the full attention it required.

The medicinal plant activities have contributed to raising the awareness of the need to protect the National Park by local communities. Agricultural trials on sloping land have also raised awareness of, and encouraged better farming practices aimed at achieving sustainable development on fragile sloping land environment. However, after reviewing information from a range of sources including project reports to AusAID, data collected by Communes, field observation of project activities in three of the four communes where project activities were concentrated, and interviews with beneficiaries, project staff and government officials, the Team felt that most of the land use and agricultural practices,

and medicinal plant and fuelwood collection practices in the project area continue to be similar to those that prevailed pre-project. The achievement of the objective of reducing human pressure on Ba Vi National Park as a result of project activities was marginal at this stage. In response, AREA maintains that the project had achieved real gains in reducing biomass consumption per family unit and significant improvements in food production in the buffer zone had occurred. It also noted that complete reduction of human influences is a long term strategy and project activities were most successful in instigating this process.

To demonstrate its achievements, AREA provided summary data that shows the number of household representatives directly targeted by the project (Table A4.3), the number of household representatives that took up project activities with nominal project support, and total project beneficiaries (Table A4.4). The data shows that about 1700 individuals or about 4 per cent of the total population in the project area were direct participants in project activities during implementation. The figure includes other farm workers, including children, relatives, and casual labour. These participants were representatives of about 18 per cent of households in 1998-99.

TABLE A4.3: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD REPRESENTATIVES DIRECTLY TARGETED BY THE PROJECT

Target group	No. of household representatives targeted by the project
Farmers involved in training/trials	678
Herbalists involved in training/trials	31
Other farmers/ herbalists involved in trials as casual labour or women workgroups	295
Farmers/herbalists involved in medicinal plant program	239
Farmers participating in fruit tree program	155
Farmers involved in additional farmer training program	189
Metal workers	20
Recipients of solar dryers	35
Recipients of tea processors	81
Recipients of cooking stoves	9
Nursery householders (fruit and medicinal plants)	7
Total household representatives directly targeted	1 739

Source: AREA project data

The data also shows that about 5 050 individuals or about 11 per cent of the population in the project area adopted project activities with nominal project support. AREA estimated the total number of project beneficiaries by multiplying by 5 (the average number of people in a household) the number of household representatives who adopted project activities. The assumption was that all members of households in which a representative participated in project activities benefited from the project.

TABLE A4.4: NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD REPRESENTATIVES TAKING UP PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Activity	No. of household representatives adopting project activities
Representatives of household targeted by the project	1 739
Representatives of household taking up project initiatives	3 641
Representatives of household taking up project activities through commune nurseries	378
Representatives of household taking up project activities through commune and hamlet leaders, Farmers' Association, Women's Union and BVNP	1 034
Total household representatives	6 792

Source: AREA project data

A4.2.3: Improving community health, decreasing biomass consumption, increasing the availability of organic agricultural inputs and enhancing the manufacturing skills of local tradespeople and increasing their business opportunities by developing, trialing and promoting a range of affordable and culturally-appropriate passive solar food dryers and fuel-efficient energy conversions systems

According to the PDD, improvements to family and community health was likely to occur as a consequence of: minimising the spread of disease by encouraging correct animal and human waste composting and reducing the habitats of disease vectors in irrigation and aquacultural systems; enhancing the quality of dried produce; improving localised air quality by introducing flued fuel-efficient cooking systems; improving nutrition by introducing new varieties of fruit, vegetable and other crops; and decreasing the health risks associated with current methods of drying agricultural produce on roadways by reducing the opportunity for ingestion and inhalation of lead, asbestos dust and other toxins (AREA 1993, p. 8).

AREA advised that improvements in community health had occurred as a consequence of project activities through: the introduction of fuel efficient tea-processors; through maintaining and, in some cases, increasing the availability of herbal preparations; by improving nutrition through greater availability and diversity of food crops; and by minimising the risk of disease through encouraging better animal and human waste disposal. (The last activity was implemented under a different ANCP-funded project). Additional health benefits mentioned included higher quality herbal preparations as a result of improved drying methods and safer and reduced use of pesticides. AREA's evidence relates more to qualitative assessment of flow-on effects of project activities. It noted that it was beyond the mandate of the project to conduct a comprehensive health survey.

The project developed and trailed 9 prototype fuel-efficient cooking systems, but their extension was not promoted. Rather, emphasis was placed on promoting improved tea processing units. It was reasoned that, because biomass consumption was up to 10 times higher per unit for tea processing than for cooking, the environmental and health benefits would be greater. The Team was advised that 81 units were produced and distributed in the project area. These units incorporated a fluing system and secondary combustion facility, which removed the harmful products of combustion from the environment, thereby lessening health risks for users and improving localised air quality. The Team reviewed project data, which reported on the performance rating and fuel usage rate of these units. However, the Team lacked the skills needed for comprehensive assessment of the reported performance and the contribution of the units to improving air quality. Nevertheless, the Team noted that widespread use of these units would have to occur for the project to have any measurable impact on improving community health. AREA reported that over 1000 households are engaged in tea processing in the buffer zone. The 81 units distributed cover 8 per cent of these households. AREA reported that the project outreach of the fuel-efficient tea processors was not extensive and the widespread adoption of the systems did not occur. It anticipates more widespread of these units in the future as their effectiveness becomes more widely known.

As discussed in Section A4.2.2, the solar food dryers distributed by the project were only suited to drying very small volumes of herbs and medicinal plants such as roots, rather than large volume crops, which are usually dried on roadways. It is therefore unlikely that these units will reduce the health risks associated with current methods of drying agricultural produce on roadways as envisaged in the PDD. The Team also felt that the health benefits from higher quality herbal preparations as a result of solar dryers appeared to be marginal due to the limited capacity of these units and the limited number in use. Indeed, AREA commented that the limited capacity of these units may be perceived as a problem by farmers who have a greater bulk of produce to be dried. However, it noted that this difficulty was offset by faster drying times and a reduction of loss of produce through humidity related problems.

Health benefits are probably greater in the area of reduced pesticide use. As discussed previously, AREA reported an overall reduction of 51 per cent in pesticide usage at demonstration trial sites. During field discussions, farm families indicated that they had reduced the number of pesticide spraying of rice crops and attributed this change to the project training activities.

The project also sought to decrease biomass consumption, increase the availability of organic agricultural inputs, enhance the manufacturing skills of local tradespeople and increase their business opportunities by developing, trialing and promoting a range of affordable and culturally-appropriate passive solar food dryers, fuel-efficient energy conversion system.

The Team was advised that 20 tradespeople were trained in the production of solar food dryers and fuel-efficient energy conversion systems. Project figures specify that 60 of the 74 solar food dryers distributed and 81 improved tea processors were produced and distributed by the tradespeople to herbalists and farmers without project support. AREA stated that before the tea processing technology was disseminated, prototype units were tested and evaluated to determine the relative performance rating and fuel usage rate of both existing and improved systems. Trial results indicated a 72 per cent minimum reduction in fuel usage (units had an efficiency rating of between 72.5 and 150). AREA noted that with an average of 2.1 tons of fuelwood per annum being used by each farming household producing tea and more than 1000 households engaged in tea processing in the buffer zone, significant reduction in fuel wood harvested from the park is anticipated as the technology spreads. It also advised that savings of 6 kg of fuelwood and 4 kg of agricultural residue for every 50 kg of raw tea processed were made.

Again the Team was not in a position to assess these reported technical energy efficiency improvements of the new units. At issue was the extent to which these fuel-efficient technologies had been adopted by farmers and herbalists for the project to achieve its objective of decreasing biomass consumption in the project area. From field observations and discussions in 3 of the 4 communes where project activities were concentrated, it was clear that the spread of these technologies was limited and the aggregate fuelwood use pattern remains similar to that prevailing before the project.

A4.2.4: Reducing the workload of women and ensuring that the project is of benefit to and meets the needs of the whole community by including a program of project participation for women

The project incorporated gender issues at the planning and design stages. The project did recognise that women had a role to play in all project activities. The PDD anticipated that a third of the direct beneficiaries of the project would be women. It expected improvements in women's status from their participation in project activities.

AREA advised that women were involved in all project activities, including field research, initial and ongoing household interviews and group meetings, training activities,

demonstration trials and the medicinal plant and appropriate technology components. A female Community Development Specialist and Vietnamese female staff were employed to work directly with women and to ensure their participation in project activities. The Team was informed that the number of female-headed households involved in the project reflected the percentage of such households within the general community and were, therefore, targeted accordingly.

From field discussions it was clear that women participated in project activities. For example, the Team was informed of one IPM and rice production practical training course that was attended by 8 women and 14 men. The Team was also informed that of the 16 farming households selected for aquacultural trials in the first year, four were women-headed households. AREA advised that Dao, Muong and Kinh women participated in transect surveys and contributed to project information on medicinal plants. One lowland group of women did express their appreciation for the training and the agricultural knowledge they received.

While the Team received this anecdotal evidence on the participation of women in project activities, at the time of the evaluation it felt that there was lack of gender baseline information in project reports to AusAID upon which to judge the extent of women's involvement in project activities and the project's impact on women, including women's status. It would have been desirable for the project to develop gender sensitive performance indicators, and to report on project progress in achieving gender related objectives. The PCR and accompanying project data provided information on gender division of labour in the project area and the number of male and female participants in project activities. For example, the data shows that 707 male and 389 female participants attended agricultural training courses. 264 male and 299 female participants were directly involved in agricultural demonstration trials, while 27 male and 33 female participants were directly involved in fish production trials. However, much of the data on gender for agricultural and fish experimental demonstration trials appears to correspond to the number of males and females belonging to households in which a representative participated in project activities. While the Team believes that women will undoubtedly benefit from project activities by virtue of belonging to a targeted household, project implementation processes were generally unclear as to how the constraints to women's participation in development were being addressed and how women's interests were being facilitated. Women were being assisted but not in a way which fundamentally changed their position in the project area.

In terms of reducing the workload of women, AREA advised that this was achieved through the reduction in time normally devoted to the drying of food and other produce by using solar food driers and fuel-efficient tea processors. This conclusion is based on the perceived energy efficiency improvements of these units. For example, AREA advised that a passive solar dryer unit can reduce drying times for 10 kg of biomass by up to two days when compared with traditional methods. Also, the reduction of 40 per cent in the loss of material through mould attack translates to 40 per cent less time being spent by women

in collecting base material. It concluded that any reduction in the loss of base material advantages women financially and reduces their workload. AREA also detailed fuelwood savings of the fuel-efficient tea processors to support its conclusion (see section A4.2.3).

From field observation of one of the solar drying units, the Team felt that these units were only suited to drying limited amounts of medicinal plant material, with the bulk of material still being dried using traditional methods. Moreover, as discussed previously, a limited number of energy efficient units were distributed to herbalists and farmers. It was felt at the time of the evaluation that the contribution of these energy efficient units to reducing the workload of women was marginal.

AREA also argued that although increased food production due to the project would naturally involve an overall increase in workload, in reality the time spent by women and men per unit of production has significantly decreased. It cited instances of reduced workload in: new rice broadcasting and tiller transplanting techniques, which reduces by 70 per cent the number of seedlings needing to be produced and transplanted; and a 51 per cent reduction in the application of pesticides, which translates to about two less sprayings per growing season. It also cited the reduction in time spent collecting medicinal plants from the forest owing to their increased availability in home garden, although it did not comment on the additional time needed to care for the plants in home gardens. The Team was unable to assess the implications of the above initiatives in reducing women's workload due to lack of appropriate data.

A4.2.5: Establishing a revolving fund to assist women, subsistence and low-income farmers and as well as tradespeople to increase their income-generating capacity by capitalising on project initiatives

This objective was scrapped and replaced with additional farmer training.

A4.2.6: Extending the skills and environmental management practices of local communities suited to the local context and strengthening the technical capacity of those Vietnamese institutions/organisations involved in environmental protection management and ecologically-sustainable development

The project improved the skills of participants and raised their environmental awareness through the Participatory Farmer Training Program. The project also developed and demonstrated more environmentally sensitive farming systems. AREA advised that the agricultural and aquacultural farming systems developed during the project had extended to over 3600 households with nominal project support. It reported that project extension activities occurred through hamlet and commune leaders. The District Chairman and commune leaders advised of their intention to continue spreading project initiatives after project completion. Most participating farmers interviewed reported that they were more aware of the need to care for the environment through their participation in project training activities.

The project also had the objective of strengthening the technical capacity of Vietnamese institutions/organisations involved in environmental protection, management and ecologically sustainable development. AREA worked with CRES to implement the project. Most Vietnamese project staff were CRES appointees, while the Project Coordinator directly represented CRES (the Project Coordinator was contracted through CRES). The Team was informed that CRES does receive quarterly and six-monthly project reports and attends PCC meetings.

The PCR detailed the process of technical assistance as well as the institutions with which the project worked. Aside from CRES and Park management, these included the College of Pharmacy, the Agricultural University #1, the Research Institute for Aquaculture #1 and the Energy Institute #1. Project staff, most of whom lecturer, were drawn from these institutions.

The project accorded high priority to providing technical assistance in regard to environmental management, and greater project resources were directed towards training activities that strengthened technical capacity than originally planned. The project was able to strengthen the technical capacity of both CRES and the university system. The technical capacity of the university lecturers who worked on the project was greatly increased as a result of their involvement in project activities, and they have transferred their newly acquired skills and knowledge to their students. AREA considered this as a major success of the project that will contribute to sustainability of project outcomes.

However, the Team was concerned about the apparent lack of project cooperation and integration with existing local organisations (such as Women's Union and Farmers' Association) and agencies (such as the agricultural and forestry extension services), raising concerns about the sustainability of project-initiated improved farming and land management techniques. In Vietnam where local organisations have an important role in community activities, the involvement of local organisations in community mobilisation encourages beneficiaries' participation in project activities, and promotes a sense of local ownership of project activities and outcomes.

AREA advised that both Women's Union and the Farmers' Association were invited to work with the project but declined because they were receiving, or were about to receive government funding to implement activities in the project area. Some members of mass organisations received training on IPM, upland conservation farming and aquaculture.

The project was effective in strengthening the technical capacity of university lecturers from Hanoi who worked on the project. The reason for the predominance of university lecturers was that farmer training, demonstration trials and extension activities were based on introducing a wide range of initiatives that required skilled educators who were proficient in various disciplines. The project provided extensive training in participatory methodologies to project staff as this was a new concept at the time. However, the Team was concerned that farmers in the project area will not be able to access this technical expertise and experience to support and sustain project initiatives after project

completion. The project appears not to have given priority to strengthening the technical capacity of some local skilled extension staff who would provide the necessary technical expertise post-project. In response, AREA advised that the capacity of the District agricultural extension staff to be involved directly in project activities was limited. There are only two agricultural extension engineers attached to the District and one at the Commune level, and they are not employed to interact directly with farmers nor do their responsibilities include providing on-site advice to farmers (AREA 1999b, p. 11).

It stated that agricultural extension services are provided through hamlet leaders (who are farmers), and the project worked extensively with these leaders, particularly through the Participatory Farmer Training Program and the demonstration trials, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustaining project activities at the grass-roots level once support was withdrawn. AREA noted that training and participation in project demonstration trials was also provided to the Ba Vi Cow and pasture Institute and members of Women's Union and the Farmers' Association, each of whom is continuing to disseminate improved agricultural and aquacultural techniques.

AREA reported that the project had no forestry component and no cooperation or integration with forestry extension services was necessary. It cooperated with both the Forestry Inventory and Planning Institute and the Forest Protection Department (responsible for National Park and protected areas) to encourage their adoption of project transect methodology. However, AREA advised that these bodies overruled Park Management from adopting project-initiated transect methodology at the time. They wanted the Park to continue using forest research procedures with which they were more familiar.

A4.2.7: Monitoring and evaluating the environmental, social, cultural and economic impact of project activities and utilising the data to adjust project output and redefine its direction if necessary

As noted previously, AREA undertook considerable research during project implementation until project completion. The Team was informed that a statement of environmental and social conditions was established in the first stage of the project, identifying stable areas and areas of concern in BVNP and its environs. The statement forms the basis for a monitoring table with factors identified and showing the current situation. The table is supported and updated with data obtained through surveys (including transect surveys) and from field notes obtained through observation and interactive discussions with project participants. For example, project officers speak to farmers involved in agricultural demonstration trials on a regular basis, up to weekly during the growing season, to obtain their views on trial progress. This information is collected in the database and collated by project staff. This forms the basis for an assessment of project progress.

While it was evident that substantial data had been collected during project implementation, the Team was concerned that this data was not used in project

documents to report on actual performance against project objectives. The Team observed that the information base generated by the project is an important resource that can facilitate professional judgement about project progress and the reporting of the extent to which design objectives have been, or are likely to be, achieved. However, much of AREA's information in project reports is superficial with no indicators reported on how the project had achieved its stated objectives, making it difficult to assess the quality of monitoring data. (AREA stated that it was not required to provide indicators under its contractual reporting obligations, and that figures were provided at PCC meetings and project records kept track of the number of demonstration trials, participating farmers and results. Summary statements were made in project reports. Moreover, no requests were ever made to provide additional information about project outputs nor comment made that the indicators on how the project achieved its objectives were unsatisfactory). Clear definition of performance indicators and performance reporting gives AusAID a clear understanding of what is being funded and contributes to its assessment of overall NGO scheme performance.

A4.3: Sustainability of project outcomes

The Participatory Farmer Training Program improved the skills of participants and raised their environmental awareness. This is likely to have a continuing influence on participating farmers. The project was also effective in strengthening the technical capacity of project staff who will transfer their newly acquired skills and knowledge to university students.

However, the overall sustainability of project outcomes is likely to be constrained by a number of factors. Full-scale agricultural and aquacultural and medicinal plant demonstration trials in farmers' fields/ponds were implemented during the last two years of the project, and agricultural trials were continuing at project completion¹¹. The Team felt that without continued project input and follow-up activities such as reinforcement training, monitoring and evaluation, these trials are unlikely to influence change more widely. AREA reported that hamlet leaders who received extensive training through Participatory Farmer Training Program were fully involved in demonstration trials, and provide agricultural extension service in the project area. However, as discussed previously the project introduced a wide range of initiatives that require skilled extension workers at the local level who are proficient in various disciplines. The Team felt that this technical capacity and experience was not developed during implementation. Moreover, there is no institutional arrangement in place to provide recurrent cost budgets to ensure the provision of similar levels of service after the completion of the project. (AREA disagreed and reported that the adoption of project-initiated farming systems to the broader community is occurring through commune and hamlet leaders and through farmers who participated in training programs and demonstration trials. Extension to over 3600 households had occurred and there was no reason to believe that it will not continue).

¹¹ AREA advised that the project methodology of introducing demonstration trials after training had been undertaken accounts for why some agricultural trials were continuing at time when AusAID funds had been acquitted. AREA and CRES supported a short extension to ensure a satisfactory conclusion of this component.

The Team felt that the participation of beneficiaries in determining community needs and related project activities was mixed. For example, the project appeared to pay insufficient attention to participatory methods in design and implementation of food preparation and processing component of the project. The Team felt that while good in theory, this component did not appear to reflect the needs of the targeted community. AREA advised that the project was designed when little latitude was given by local authorities to include community members in design and implementation procedures, and when the concept of implementing activities based on meeting community and environmental needs was non-existent. Participation of beneficiaries was predominant during the implementation stage (eg in the farmer Training Program, transect surveys, demonstration trials and project monitoring).

The PCR noted some difficulties associated with continued availability of high quality fingerling for the aquacultural component, which would make the most suitable use of farmers' ponds (both economically and environmentally) (see section A4.2.1). AREA intends to address this problem by training selected farmers in raising high-quality fingerlings in the next phase of the project.

Problems associated with allowing cultivation on steep slopes within the National Park only emerged towards the end of the project, and lack of time and resources precluded this component from receiving the full attention it required. While AREA advised that this had no effect on the results of the demonstration trials, the Team felt that without continued project input and follow-up activities, these trials are unlikely to influence change as was intended.

In relation to solar food dryers and fuel-efficient tea processors, the project's outreach and the limited capacity of these units cast doubt on the sustainability of this component. AREA advised that the wider adoption is expected as the advantages of improved technologies become better known and more units become available.

Overall, the project gave attention to improving environmental conditions in the project area. It demonstrated improved agricultural and aquacultural farming systems and raised the skills and environmental awareness of participant in the project area. However, the Team felt that the impact and effectiveness of the project was significantly constrained by an overambitious design and broad-ranging objectives. The adoption by the target group of improved food production and ecologically sustainable management practices was limited in scope making the long-term sustainability of the project activities uncertain. While the Team received anecdotal evidence of women's participation in project activities, and project data on the number of women that participated in project activities, it felt that project implementation processes were generally unclear as to how women's interests were being facilitated and how the situation of women in the project area had changed.

The project was implemented over a four-year period. It was probably unrealistic to expect that the project could make a large contribution to major agricultural, environmental and social change in a short time. Such projects require more than four years to be effective.

A4.4 Project lessons

A good project design contributes to project success. The definition of simple and achievable objectives, outputs and performance indicators contributes to reliable monitoring of project performance and implementation of activities, gives AusAID a clear understanding of what is being funded, and contributes to its assessment of overall NGO scheme performance.

Appropriate attention to gender analysis of agricultural and other production systems is likely to lead to effective development impacts. Such information should form a key part of any baseline information. It should also be used to demonstrate improvements to the situation of women in the project area.

Projects should aim to work through local agencies and structures to promote sustainability. Activities that promote a wide range of initiatives should develop skilled technical capacity and experience at the local level to support project initiatives after project completion. Opportunities for recurrent cost funding should be put in place to ensure the provision of similar levels of service post-project.

APPENDIX 5: CARE ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING FOR WOMEN FOR PROTECTION FROM HIV/AIDS PROJECT

A5.1 Project background

The concept of the project was based on the notion that sexual negotiation requires assertive communication techniques. The assumption was that combined with knowledge and awareness of the modes of HIV transmission, assertiveness skills would give women the power to negotiate safe sex without embarrassment in intimate settings, where self-protection behaviour is needed.

This project was developed by CARE International in Vietnam over a three year period in negotiation with the WU of HCMC, the health department of HCMC, An Giang and Vung Tau and the provincial AIDS committees. AusAID's contribution to the project was \$271 000 through CARE Australia under the NOVA program. The project was completed in June 1999.

A5.2 Achievement of objectives

Project design

The overall aim of the project was to document methods for teaching culturally appropriate assertiveness skills to women for the purpose of safer sex negotiation, thus lowering the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection.

The project has four objectives:

- develop a methodology and approach to assertiveness training for women in order to promote safe sex practices and sexual negotiating skills;
- develop and trial an assertiveness training package for use throughout Vietnam;
- train a core of 14 women trainers in HCMC, An Giang and Vung Tau provinces in assertiveness skills and effective training techniques who will then train another 2240 women in assertiveness skills; and
- stimulate greater debate amongst the Vietnamese people concerning sexual negotiations for HIV/AIDS protection.

Overall, the design provides a set of activities that would be expected to lead to the achievement of objectives. However, the Team noted that some objectives were not adequately defined and, in some cases, were beyond the capacity of the project to effect (see below).

A5.2.1 Develop a methodology and approach to assertiveness training for women in order to promote safe sex practices and sexual negotiating skills

From discussions with project staff, the Team understood what the project was attempting to achieve under this objective namely, to undertake research through surveys and focus groups discussions to assess attitudes on sex relationships, assertiveness and negotiation skills. While it could be argued that a methodology ensued, the output of the research was actually a report on the findings that informed the second objective.

That said, the Open University Women's Studies Department conducted research on a sample of 100 women in HCMC. This research fed into the development of the assertiveness training package for eventual use throughout Vietnam. However, the Team was unable to assess whether the research findings were representative of women experiences in other parts the country and the implications for wider applicability of the training package nationally. Nevertheless, based on research findings an assertiveness training manual was produced and distributed to interested parties through the Vietnam Women's Union.

A5.2.2 Develop and trial an assertiveness training package for use throughout Vietnam

The Team was advised that CARE in Vietnam developed the training package in collaboration with the WU of three provinces. The package addressed four main issues - reproductive system, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), safer sex and assertiveness. Trainers and trainees interviewed appreciated clearness and the contents of the package, particularly information about the female body, STDs, assertiveness training and negotiation skills. They considered both the training and training package to be very effective.

However, as noted earlier the Team was unable to assess the appropriateness of the training package for use throughout Vietnam. Producing such a package for use nationally would require considerable piloting and trialing amongst people from different socio-economic and cultural groups.

A5.2.3 Train a core of 14 women trainers in HCMC, An Giang and Vung Tau provinces in assertiveness skills and effective training techniques who will then train another 2240 women in assertiveness skills

The Team was advised that a group of 34 women from the WU were successfully trained to become trainers (TOTs) for other groups of women. (The original design had planned to train 14 TOTs). The TOTs interviewed commented positively on the innovativeness of the training and saw the training package as practical and culturally appropriate. The TOTs subsequently trained a total of about 2400 women in four provinces.

Women trainees interviewed were enthusiastic about the course content and explained in detail what they had learned. One woman showed through role play how she could now deal more assertively in sexual negotiations with her husband. Most women felt that they now have the knowledge and skills to enable them to discuss HIV/AIDS issues with their families and women friends. More generally, they agreed that the training had improved their self-esteem and the negotiation skills learned had wider application to other activities in public life.

Although the project was designed specifically for women, most thought that the project should have conducted some workshops for men to inform them about the objectives of program to cultivate a more accepting atmosphere from their spouses. Some women also thought that project outcomes could have been enhanced by a more formal peer support network to encourage women to share experiences and develop and discuss revised negotiations strategies to overcome spouse reluctance.

Overall, the project appears to have delivered the intended training successfully. It is likely that dissemination of information will occur amongst many different groups of women in the community. Women who have been trained indicated their willingness to share their knowledge amongst family friends and immediate neighbours within their communes. However, it appears that wider dissemination of project outcomes beyond communes is likely to be low. The team also felt that the key objective of the project - protection from HIV/AIDS through improving the capacity to negotiate safe sex with partners - will be difficult to achieve because of the cultural constraints that determine gender power relations in the home.

A5.2.4 Stimulate greater debate amongst the Vietnamese people concerning sexual negotiations for HIV/AIDS protection

The Team was unable to assess the extent to which the project is likely to stimulate greater debate amongst the Vietnamese people concerning sexual negotiations for HIV/AIDS protection.

A5.2.5 Performance monitoring and reporting

Baseline data was collected through questionnaire surveys in order to develop the Assertiveness Training manual. The team felt that the data was useful for developing an innovative approach to these issues. However, it appeared that there were similarities between some of the data collected through this project's survey, and data collected by other activities and projects to produce IEC materials. The team was of the opinion that this project, and other projects, could reduce duplication of effort through better sharing of available information.

CARE in Vietnam monitored the project in conjunction with the implementing Women's Unions. The effectiveness of training was evaluated through training evaluation questionnaires, which were collated by CARE's Ho Chi Minh City office. This was a positive aspect of the project.

The women trained disseminated their knowledge at commune level, through forums and meetings. However, the team was concerned that there appears to be little sharing of ideas between trainers at the commune and provincial levels. Improved communication between trainers could assist evaluating the wider applicability of the program to other provinces.

A5.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

The Team judged the sustainability of project outcomes to be high at least in the project area. The project was very effective in involving the WU in all stages of development and implementation. They now perceive the project as their own.

While trainees indicated their interest in having additional training, they led the Team to believe that there would be an effective initial diffusion of information, to the extent of immediate friends and family. However, wider diffusion beyond the project area is likely to be limited. Some women commented on cultural factors that tend to inhibit open discussion of sexual issues with people they are not familiar with.

The sustainability of project benefits is likely to be further enhanced by the planned implementation of a similar project for men - 'Men in the Know'.

A5.4: Project lessons

- Logical project design, with relevant, achievable and measurable objectives is essential to implementation and evaluation. Designs should not be over ambitious, particularly where objectives are beyond the capacity of the project to effect.
- Participatory processes are essential in developing relevant training packages. While women's stand alone projects have their place, projects should give due attention to the needs of both men and women, providing for the design of a separate men's project, at the same time as a women's project, where appropriate.
- Project materials should be designed for a specific target audience and should be appropriately piloted before use. The relevance of specific training materials to other areas should be carefully considered with other communities and piloted, with appropriate modifications made, as necessary.

APPENDIX 6: SCA BINH THUAN BASIC EDUCATION AND TEACHER TRAINING PROJECT

A6.1: Project background

The Binh Thuan Basic Education and Teacher Training project was jointly designed by Save the Children Australia (SCA) and Enfants et Developpement (EED- Save the Children France). EED had been implementing a Community Development Project for the Children of Binh Thuan with health, education and credit components since 1993. SCA assumed the management of the project in 1995. The project was implemented by the Binh Thuan Committee for the Children's Protection and Care and the Binh Thuan Provincial Education Department.

The project targeted three districts of Binh Thuan Province. Within these districts, ten communes were assisted. Five of these are mountainous communes populated by majority ethnic minority communities and five are categorised as poor communes (where per capita monthly income is less 15 kg of milled rice or 50 000 VND).

Between 1995 and 1998, AusAID contributed \$826 000 to the project through the NOVA program.

A6.2: Achievement of objectives

Project design

The goal of the project was to facilitate the development of the human resource base through better access to primary education and improved teacher training capacity in Binh Thuan Province. This was to be achieved through three main objectives:

- to strengthen the capability and capacity of the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) to provide appropriate, effective and efficient training for primary school teachers;
- to improve the quality of, and access to, primary education in specific, difficult areas of Binh Thuan Province, particularly for ethnic minority communities; and
- to provide for effective project implementation and management, and to plan, coordinate, support and monitor project activities.

The evaluation focused on activities implemented during Phase I of the project. While Phase II has recently commenced, the Team was confident that the second phase was addressing aspects of the project identified as problematic in the first phase.

A6.2.1: Strengthen the capability and capacity of the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) to provide appropriate, effective and efficient training for primary school teachers

The Team was advised that a total of 40 core trainers were trained in the new active teaching methodology. Of these, 25 were TTI staff and the rest were from District Educational Department and some from the primary school education system. Discussions with TTI staff indicated that the project training provided useful knowledge on child-centred active teaching methods and that staff and students were interested in pursuing this.

The TTI staff stated that the new methods encouraged learning attitudes amongst students, promoted greater confidence amongst teachers and students and the training of final year TTI students in the new methodology facilitated the transfer of the knowledge more widely to students in schools. They also appreciated the reinforcement of new ideas from outside educational specialists.

However, the TTI staff identified some problems that appear to be directly related to lack of participatory methods in project design and implementation. This dates back to an earlier phase of the project when a lack of understanding of the TTI curriculum by the then project staff and an apparent lack of discussion with, and participation of the TTI, caused a number of difficulties. This situation appears to be of continuing concern for the TTI as there still appears to be a lack of fit between the needs of the TTI and project activities. Problems include the curriculum being too general for the training needs of the TTI. In their opinion, the training should have been subject-specific. For example, the Team was advised that of the 25 TTI staff trained, only 12 were able to apply the new methodology in their work, as the methodology is not applicable to all subjects. The teachers applying the methodology are those teaching mathematics and Vietnamese language. It was suggested that because of the very heavy load of the existing national curriculum and the time allowed for each subject, 45 minutes under the national system, the new methodology was difficult to introduce into primary schools as it required at least one hour to be implemented.

Further, practical teaching, at the level of the classroom, under the new system requires extra lesson time, over and above the normal lesson time provided by the existing school system. Such issues should ideally have been identified by, and examined with the beneficiaries at the time of project conception, thus ensuring an appropriate solution was found prior to project design.

In response to the draft report, SCA advised many of the concerns raised above were noted during project implementation and led to ongoing variation in the design. It also advised that Phase II of the project was designed on the strengths of Phase I and addressed many aspects of the project identified as problematic in Phase I (SCA 1999, pp. 2-3).

Materials such as reference and textbooks supplied to the TTI by the project were very much appreciated as many trainee teachers came from poor backgrounds and could not afford to spend much on training materials. Other school materials supplied were also considered appropriate and practical. However, it was noted that materials included a video recorder which could not be used as none of the schools had TV and video equipment.

Overall, it seems that the project made a good contribution to strengthening the capacity of the TTI to provide effective training for primary school teachers. Staff skills at the TTI benefited from project training. There is scope for improvements in the methods for staff training and beneficiaries' participation in the process.

A6.2.2: Improve the quality of, and access to, primary education in specific, difficult areas of Binh Thuan Province, particularly for ethnic minority communities

This objective sought to improve access to quality education through building teacher capacity, improving the education environment and addressing issues of economic hardship in project areas.

In discussions with those involved in the implementation of the project, the Team was informed that 300 trainee teachers attended awareness raising workshops on the methodologies and their application in the classroom. In addition to these teachers, training was extended to key school staff beyond the project communes.

The Team was further advised that 20 classrooms had been constructed in the project area and 8 run-down classrooms renovated. It was claimed that increased number of classrooms reduced the need for three school shifts in the project area and enabled more students to attend school for more hours each week.

Salary supplements were provided to trained teachers to enable them to spend the preparation time necessary for applying the new methods in the classroom, instead of attending to other income-generation activities to supplement their teaching income. The project also supplied over 1000 scholarships to disadvantaged children to help reduce the school drop-out rate.

In discussions, project staff claimed that the introduction of active teaching methods has resulted in over 90 per cent of teachers in the target area adopting the approaches, with between 40-50 per cent doing it confidently. Discussions with teachers and pupils in one project school revealed changes that have occurred in the classroom atmosphere due to the project. They commented on the relaxed learning environment, closer relationships between teachers and students and increased confidence of students. From classroom observation and discussions with principals and teachers, it was evident that the principles and techniques introduced were understood and being applied. Indeed, school students, both boys and girls, appeared to be interacting well in groups during one classroom visit. Students and staff in the single non-project school visited were aware of the benefits of the new methodology and expressed a desire to be included in any future expansion of the project.

Parents Committees (already existing before the project started its activities) are reactivated at the beginning of each school year. Such committees raise funds for school facilities, support poor children and raise awareness of the importance of education within the community. The Parents Committee, at one of the schools visited, establishes a yearly workplan. It holds monthly meetings with the school where information on school activities and drop-out rates are discussed. There was a high level of participation between one of the schools visited and the Parents Committee.

The impact of the project on enrolment (especially girls), attendance and retention rates and overall student performance was unable to be assessed due to limited records surveyed by the Team and outside factors impinging on student attendance at schools generally. However, project staff claimed that more children now go to school and the rates of repeating and student drop-out had decreased. But according to information in a Provincial final report on the project, increased enrolment, particularly amongst girls appeared not to have been achieved for several reasons, including a change in curriculum from 120 to 165 weeks for primary school, student health problems and inclement weather.

The Team was unable to visit any ethnic minority community supported under the project due to time constraints. However, education issues relating to these communities were discussed with TTI and officials from the Provincial Education Department. They pointed to the difficulties of implementing the project in the cross-cultural and second language learning contexts. They noted that teachers from these communities required more specialised training which was not possible during the project. Moreover, under the summer school training program that was focused on teachers from ethnic minority communes or those working in ethnic minority schools, most participants were from majority Kinh schools or groups. Course participants were expected to have passed Grade 9, which excluded many from ethnic minorities (SCA 1998). The Provincial Education Department hoped that specialist training for these teachers would be possible as part of a second phase of the project.

Overall, it appears the project made a significant contribution in improving the quality of primary education, particularly in the application of the new methodology to the teaching of mathematics and socio-natural subjects. Teachers interviewed nominated these two subjects as the easiest areas to apply the new methods, with Language seen as the most difficult subject to employ the methodology. They recommended that for the second phase the specialist team and district trainers look at the national curriculum more closely in developing strategies for the application of the new methodology to different subjects. The project appears to have had a moderate impact in improving the skills of teachers from ethnic minority communities.

A6.2.3: Provide for effective project implementation and management, and to plan, coordinate, support and monitor project activities

In response to the draft report, SCA advised that EED undertook a comprehensive baseline survey in project districts to inform the project design process, including the selection of communes to be targeted. This information may be useful to establish a basis for measuring project performance. Also, data on school attendance and pass rates assessing project performance. For example, the new method of teaching introduced in Tan Thanh Commune school was believed to have contributed to higher pass rates.

The project has a Project Monitoring Committee consisting of Provincial Education, Finance and Planning and Investment Departments, as well as the CPCC and project staff. They have a quarterly PCC meeting for all projects and separate six monthly meeting for the SCA education project. Representatives from the Provincial Departments attend the PCC as necessary. At the PCC, the plan of action is discussed, which forms the basis for release of project funding. (For Year 1, SCA implemented the project directly. From Years 2 and 3, local partners implemented the project).

SCA advised that the understanding of the provincial and district level project managers in project management and in community development has increased markedly and this is reflected in the design of Phase II of the project (SCA 1999, p. 2).

Monitoring takes place through classroom observation and from feedback obtained during training workshops. Teachers provided comments on their training at workshops and to SCA specialists. Through these comments, it was found that initial training was not well targeted, and was subsequently improved. The team felt that communication mechanisms were appropriate, although application of the new training methods for school students at the TTI might improve teacher training quality and feedback opportunities.

Parents Committees for schools, involving Women's Unions, provide an ongoing means to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods for direct beneficiaries.

A6.3: Sustainability of project outcomes

It is likely that most of the project child-centred active teaching methods will be sustainable because the project involved provincial authorities more closely in developing and implementing the project. These authorities have developed local systems of training and monitoring teacher application of the new methods. The new teaching methods are likely to have a continuing influence on not only the project sites, but also on the district and provincial training systems. Moreover, new incoming teachers to project schools are trained by project trained teachers and observe classes given by these teachers. There are also regular meetings between new and experienced teachers.

However, the cost of materials used for teaching the new methodology are relatively expensive and the Team was informed that without additional funding it would be difficult to obtain these materials.

While teachers appreciated salary supplements, those interviewed felt that cessation of such supplements would be unlikely to negatively affect the new teaching methods as they had already become part of the teaching culture in those schools within the project area. SCA advised that the majority of the funding for the salary supplements for teachers (and additional construction of classrooms/provision of equipment) was provided through province funding.

A6.4: Project lessons

Project design and participatory methods

- Participation in the development of a project's objectives and during implementation is essential to ensure appropriate and relevant project design and project interventions as well as to promote enthusiasm, ownership and impact. For example, better alignment of the new teaching methodology with the national curriculum requirements would have enabled the methodology to be applied to more subjects.
- Involvement of communities in school activities can promote two-way communication between school authorities and parents. Such involvement can facilitate parents' understanding of the role of education, and its value to both girls and boys. It can contribute to increasing enrolments and reducing drop-out rates. Involvement of the community can also ensure that appropriate school amenities are provided as a result of parental interest and commitment.

Targeting the poor

- Targeting the poor with innovative educational programs has the potential to reduce poverty and bring socio-economic benefits to remote communities, through increasing life options for future generations.

APPENDIX 7: UNICEF BASIC EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES AND DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

A7.1: Project background

The Basic Education for Ethnic Minorities and Other Disadvantaged Children Project is a large ongoing multilateral project which AusAID and UNICEF Australia have supported since 1992. The overall goal of the project is to reduce the high failure and drop-out rates among ethnic minority children in remote, rural and mountainous areas through the promotion of Multigrade and Bilingual Education (MBE) in primary schools. Broadly, project activities include the development of different kinds of teaching and learning materials, provision of pre-service and in-service teacher training and provision of relevant teaching and learning materials to multigrade primary schools. UNICEF Australia (1998a) noted that the project has been implemented in 1187 schools in 37 provinces. There are now 5150 classes involving 127 934 children of whom 55 316 are girls and 90 700 are minority children.

Given the large-scale nature and wide geographical coverage of the project, it was not possible to evaluate all of its components in the time available. Rather, the Team sought to assess the performance of the AusAID-supported components under the ANCP program, and how these components have contributed to the achievement of the overall project goal. A large part of ANCP funding was focused on teacher training activities and the development and distribution of teaching materials. Between 1995-96 and 1997-98, AusAID contributed \$331 000 to the project through the ANCP program.

A7.2: Achievement of objectives

Project design

The Team found it difficult to evaluate the performance of ANCP funded components because objectives were not defined in such a way that performance targets or indicators could be readily established. Moreover, project reporting of ANCP funded components does not present the overall project context, making it difficult to interpret where these components fitted into the larger project.

The team sought clarification from project staff on the intended objectives and these provide the structure of this evaluation:

- develop teaching materials for students, teachers and communities;
- supply appropriate teaching materials and books for classroom use;
- upgrade teachers' skills through training workshops, seminars and field studies;
- establish better learning conditions and increase attendance at targeted schools; and
- provide effective project management, administration and monitoring support.

A7.2.1: Development of teaching materials for students teachers and communities

This objective sought to contribute to the development of student workbooks, student guidebooks and teachers' guidebooks which support multigrade teaching. The Team was informed that the development of these materials has been progressing since the start of the project. By the time of the evaluation, 11 multigrade teaching modules had been developed, piloted and produced. It appears that the ANCP funding has contributed to the development of two more multigrade teaching models (modules 12 and 13) on prevention of HIV/AIDS through a life skills approach, and health and environmental education in schools. These modules are expected to be finalised in 1999. UNICEF has also worked with the GOV to introduce a health subject into the national curriculum. It has developed a health booklet that is yet to be printed.

Discussions with teachers, parents and education officials revealed widespread satisfaction with the teaching materials produced. The Team visited a number of multigrade classes in Hoa Binh Province and observed certain workbooks (maths, art, Vietnamese language) being used. High standards in classroom participation and interaction between teachers and students, and amongst groups of students, were observed in these classes. The team did not see any of the teachers' resource books and teaching aids in use. However, we were told that they exist. For example, project staff claimed that the project provided funding for self-made teaching aids for 5000 teachers.

Teachers interviewed commented that workbooks enabled children to engage actively in learning and to develop learning independence. The use of workbook also freed the teacher to work with other students. Some parents commented that the use of workbooks has encouraged them to set aside time for their children to do their homework.

However, some people thought that the impact of workbooks was limited as it was a 'one off' distribution and could not be used a second time. They suggested that a textbook was more valuable in that it could be reused many times by a number of students.

A7.2.2: Provision of appropriate teaching materials and books for classroom use

It was not possible to assess all the materials and books supplied by the project. However, according to UNICEF data about 231 000 workbooks on four subjects and 540 000 notepads were distributed to 60 000 students in the project area. The project has also distributed 500 radio cassette recorders to teachers to facilitate learning activities in remote and mountainous areas.

A7.2.3: Upgrading teachers' skills through training workshops, seminars and field studies

The project clearly accorded a high priority to the training of multigrade teachers especially those from remote and mountainous areas. Many teachers in mountainous areas do not possess the standard qualification required by the Teachers' Training Department of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). These teachers have only basic teacher training and require more training to improve their skills in multigrade teaching methods. Consequently, the project has provided pre-service training for ethnic minority students in Teacher Training Schools and in-service training for teachers. For instance, in 1996-97 the project provided pre-service training observation and teaching practice for 240 student teachers at 12 accelerated training centres. In addition, 20 in-service training courses were held for 600 teachers in 20 provinces on the first four modules on multigrade education techniques. In 1997-98, the project provided in-service and accelerated training for 912 teachers from 57 districts of 27 provinces (UNICEF Australia 1998a, 1998b).

The evaluation Team visited a number of multi-grade schools and observed efficient and effective teaching of children at all levels, including one five level class. Teachers interviewed expressed the view that the training provided was excellent and enabled them to have a positive impact on the children's education. They were able to mention the various UNICEF's multigrade models they were trained in.

The District Education Teacher Training Centre, supported by the project, appeared to be providing quality teacher training and improved in-service training through accelerated and multi-grade teacher training. Quality control was assured through examination. The policy of selecting teacher trainees from ethnic minority areas and subsequently locating them back in their area of origin appears to have had a significant impact on teacher numbers and retention of teachers. As a result of assistance from the project, there is apparently now no shortage of minority teachers. The GOV policy initiative to provide multigrade teachers with increased salaries of as much as 75 per cent may have contributed to the retention of teachers.

A7.2.4: Establishment of better learning conditions and increased attendance at targeted schools

The project appears to have made a significant contribution to providing opportunities for children in remote and mountainous areas to enter primary school. The project, with its multigrade classes provides the only education option in remote locations by bringing education services closer to where children live. For example, the Team was informed that the enrolment rate of 6-14 year olds in Da Bac District (Hoa Binh Province) had reached

100 per cent. Provincial and District education officials also advised that the project had contributed to the achievement of Universal Primary Education and the elimination of 'white' villages in Hoa Binh Province¹².

The team was informed of the high levels of participation and retention that have been achieved in project schools. For example, education officials in Da Bac District advised that the drop-out rate from multigrade classes was as low as 1.9 per cent per year for the past three years. While most children tend to continue to lower secondary school, about 5 per cent drop out, mostly from very poor families. More girls than boys tend to drop out of school.

The project appears to have engendered high levels of parental and community involvement and satisfaction with multigrade teaching. Parents contributed their labour to improve school facilities. They made considerable sacrifices to ensure both girls and boys attended schools. Assistance was available to 'poor' families, from communes, to enable children to attend schools.

While there were no specific gender objectives, the project was non-discriminatory. Girls and boys had equal opportunities to participate in school activities. Indeed, girls were often nominated as group leaders in classroom activities observed. Parents interviewed saw the education of their children, whether girls or boys, as essential for providing improved life opportunities. While there was a high percentage of women teachers, this may have been due to cultural values which encouraged women to take teaching positions at primary level.

A7.2.5: Project management, monitoring and reporting

The project is jointly managed and closely monitored by MOET at central, provincial and district levels. In addition to overall project coordination, UNICEF in Vietnam provides technical and financial support to the project.

As this project is working at the national level, baseline data appears to be based on GOV records. The Team was advised that monitoring and reporting is agreed at a high level, between UNICEF and GOV. Project monitoring is based on standard UN/UNICEF guidelines and agreements. Project performance is monitored through existing GOV processes in the MOET. UNICEF's project partner, the Research Centre for Ethnic Minorities Education (under MOET), provides quarterly reporting to UNICEF from which reports are compiled.

Given time constraints and nature of project activities in Hoa Binh, the Team could not accurately assess the extent to which project beneficiaries could provide input into project improvement. However, UNICEF reported that a yearly review of the project is undertaken at provincial level (at which a UNICEF officer may attend). UNICEF project officers undertake regular monitoring visits to assess project implementation. They also

12 For ethnic minority regions and remote areas, universal education is defined as 90 per cent of children completing Grade 3. White village is a term for villages where there are no schools or with schools that are not functioning.

assess the extent to which project fostered skills are being utilised through training workshops. UNICEF Australia project officers also visit project sites, but it is difficult to assess the extent to which these staff may influence project implementation. Although UNICEF (or UNICEF Australia) may identify additional needs in project implementation, the GOV counterpart agency is ultimately responsible for implementing revisions for the project.

7.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

Overall sustainability is judged good from most perspectives of the project. From an institutional perspective, the project is working with and supporting MOET's basic education program for ethnic minorities in the form of Multigrade Education. Through the project, MOET has significantly increased its capacity to establish and sustain education activities in remote and mountainous areas of Vietnam. However, the continued viability of the project depends to a greater extent on the provision of sufficient GOV funding to allow MOET to further develop programs of multigrade teacher training and preparation of teaching materials, activities which are within the capabilities of MOET if budgetary provisions are made.

The training of teachers from remote and mountainous areas and government's policy of increasing multigrade teachers' salaries by up to 75 per cent, in some cases, will ensure the continued supply and retention of teachers in these areas. The contributions provided by local communities, including materials and labour for construction and maintenance of classrooms, have assisted in creating a sense of community ownership of the project. This will further promote sustainability.

However, the area in which sustainability is low concerns the continued supply of educational materials. For project outcomes to be maintained, teaching materials such as modules and workbooks need to be continually reproduced and disseminated to all target beneficiaries. However, the current national government budget for these activities is inadequate to maintain the supply of materials at current levels. UNICEF (1998) noted that the national government is only able to fund 20 per cent of costs while the project's financial contribution can cover only one-third of the demand every year. It is possible that income-generation activities to enable beneficiaries to make some contributions could reduce this constraint.

7.4 Project lessons

Project design

- Project objectives need to be defined in such a way that performance targets and indicators can be easily established. This can encourage regular data collection and monitoring of progress against project objectives.
- Projects receiving funding from multiple sources should be presented to AusAID with the overall project context supplied so that the AusAID-funded components of the activity can be reported and evaluated separately.

Sustainability

- It is clear that working with existing government structures at different levels, and mass organisations, provides for better participation in project design and implementation and promotes local ownership of project activities. Activities that build on existing local structures and government programs such as the basin education program for ethnic minorities are more likely to be sustainable after project funding ceases. Where a project links in with the national program, it is essential to identify discrete components/activities in which the project operates so that its contribution can be assessed more clearly.
- More attention in project design and implementation needs to be given to strategies that will ensure sustainability of project benefits after project completion. For example, inclusion of income-generation activities in design could enable beneficiaries to make some contributions towards recurrent costs.

APPENDIX 8: WVA DA NANG AIDS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROJECT

A8.1: Project background

The Da Nang AIDS Education and Awareness project followed an earlier AusAID-funded project - the Quang Nam - Da Nang AIDS Control and Prevention Project (1992-1995) - that assisted the province's Preventive Medical Centre (PMC) with initial HIV/AIDS education, prevention and surveillance. The Da Nang AIDS Education and Awareness Project was designed to further develop community-based peer education, incorporate lessons from the previous project and take account of epidemiology and National AIDS Council (NAC) policy shifts. The project relied on a partnership between World Vision in Vietnam and several government departments such as Preventative Medical Centre and Departments of Education and Health to provide education and skills training for high risk groups, community counsellors and outreach workers.

The project was implemented from 1995 to 1998. AusAID contributed \$226 000 to the project through the NOVA program.

A8.2: Achievement of objectives

Project design

The goal of the project was to reduce the spread of HIV in the province of Quang Nam - Da Nang through decreased high risk behaviour. This was to be done through increased awareness and understanding of HIV transmission in Hoi An District and Da Nang City. Emphasis was placed on educating potential high risk groups, children and young adults, especially those who had not initiated high risk behaviour. The assumption was that increased awareness and understanding of HIV transmission would result in decreased risk behaviour, hence reducing the rate of transmission of HIV in the province.

The project pursued four objectives:

- Detailed research on risk behaviour conducted;
- AIDS education campaigns amongst school children and young adults designed and conducted;
- AIDS education campaigns amongst children and young adults not in school designed and conducted; and
- Preventative Medical Centre's counselling, community care and AIDS awareness activities further developed and implemented.

A8.2.1: Detailed research on risk behaviour conducted

The Team was unable to evaluate this objective in its specificity because of time constraints. However, an earlier evaluation rated the achievement of the research objective highly (Morrow 1998). Project staff advised that two major linked research activities were undertaken, generating useful information on community attitudes and behaviours on which to base a secondary school curriculum. A participatory learning and action (PLA) survey was carried among youths to determine knowledge, attitudes and behaviour related to HIV. This was followed by a focus group survey with youth to further explore issues in the PLA survey.

Those interviewed commented on other benefits derived from the research component. They suggested that it had enabled HIV/AIDS materials to be developed and appropriate training to be conducted. It led to capacity building in research and analytical skills for many members of the project. To reinforce these skills, in-country study tours were conducted in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

However, it appears that most of this research was qualitative in nature and inappropriate as a baseline from which to evaluate project impact over time. Indeed, in an earlier evaluation of the project Morrow (1998) observed that future projects should collect reliable, valid baseline data (both qualitative and quantitative) to facilitate final evaluation and monitoring. It also appears that both research activities focused only on young people. Assessment of wider community attitudes could have benefited from the involvement of parents, and community groups and by paying more attention to gender.

A8.2.2: AIDS education campaigns amongst school children and young adults designed and conducted

Despite initial delays, the project was successful in developing a life skills curriculum that is now fully integrated at each secondary grade level in Da Nang. The Team was informed that the teaching materials were framed within the broad parameters of the National and Provincial AIDS Committee and received endorsement from the Departments of Health and Education. Teachers at all schools received training in curriculum modules and teaching methods. Discussions with school officials, teachers and students in one school visited indicated that the educational materials developed as part of the campaign were appreciated.

However, the team was advised that there was only one hour per month set aside for teaching HIV/AIDS issues. Only one-third of the total program had been taught due to the late introduction of the materials. Most people associated with the project considered it premature to reach any firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the curriculum, let alone the AIDS education campaign.

It was not possible to assess the broad educational campaign relating to AIDS as effort appeared to have concentrated on the production of educational materials in the first instance. However, it was noted that many outside influences such as TV, radio and

posters undoubtedly impacted on students' knowledge. Nonetheless, at one school visited the Team observed an effective pedagogic approach to interactive and participatory teaching of HIV/AIDS materials.

School officials and teachers spoken to indicated their desire for additional training and follow-up activities. The Department of Education (DOE) officials raised the desirability of having incentives for teachers as well as training for key education staff. They expressed the need for the evaluation of the impact of the educational materials through holding workshops with students, teachers and parents to obtain feedback to improve the curriculum.

A8.2.3: AIDS education campaigns amongst children and young adults not in school designed and conducted

The project was moderately successful in devising strategies to reach young people not in school as originally planned. The original intention was to develop a curriculum for the out-of-school youth, who comprise a large majority of the population. However, due to several difficulties this activity was dropped and a variety of other approaches were used to reach this group.

The group benefited from the outreach activities for HIV prevention undertaken across risk groups such as commercial sex workers and injecting drug users as well as ordinary people. These activities included training of peer educators, development of varied IEC materials, and regular presentations by drama teams in various locations and mass campaigns and competitions. However, the Team did not have the opportunity to discuss these initiatives with young people not in school.

A8.2.4: Preventative Medical Centre's counselling, community care and AIDS awareness activities further developed and implemented

This objective was modified to focus on training outreach workers rather than Preventative Medical Centre staff as was originally planned in order to extend project reach.

This evaluation confirms the findings of an earlier evaluation (Morrow 1998) that outreach worker training within this project appears to have been one of its most successful components. It targeted not only commercial sex workers (CSWs) and injecting drug users (IDUs), but also ordinary people. The team was informed that health workers and voluntary care workers at various levels were trained in management, prevention and care of people living with AIDS (PLWAs), as well as communication and counselling skills. These outreach workers are now supported by PMC.

Those outreach workers interviewed stated that they had received much training through the project. However, with wider availability of media campaigns concerning AIDS, they believe further training would enable them to keep abreast of the latest information. Outreach workers perceive attitude change amongst IDUs and CSWs which they attribute to project activities. Outreach workers also advised that they visited, during the project, 30-40 IDUs/CSW per week. After project completion this has dropped to about

20 per week, partly due to the shortage of funds (formerly they received incentive), but also due to strong ‘Social Evils Campaigns’ which had created difficulties for workers wishing to reach clients. While they thought community awareness was improving, they also believed that many people still privately discriminate against them.

The team also interviewed PLWAs. They expressed a desire to participate in job creation programs so as to lead a more normal life.

The Evaluation Team visited the resource centre at the Preventative Medicine Centre (PMC) set up with project assistance and now funded by the PMC. The centre is accessible to the public and contains materials relating to HIV/AIDS including newsletters, leaflets, video cassettes, cassette tapes and slides. Newsletters printed by PMC are distributed to 47 medical centres. The centre also has information on infection rates in Vietnam and Da Nang, including current and updateable tabular information.

A8.2.5: Project monitoring and reporting

The Team was concerned that the qualitative nature and target group for project research may create difficulties for more objective assessment of project performance. In particular, it was felt that, as the research was conducted on young people, it is difficult to use the research to draw conclusions about the wider community especially injecting drug users and commercial sex workers.

The Team also observed that information sharing amongst NGOs and other agencies working on HIV/AIDS projects in Vietnam appears limited, and there is a possibility of unnecessary duplication of research. This project could have benefited from the lessons learned in other HIV/AIDS projects specifically targeting youth.

Due to time constraints, the Team found it difficult to review the monitoring systems of the project. However, the Team was aware of monthly Project Management Board (PMB) meetings at which the plan of action would be discussed. World Vision would only attend meetings where discussion was required relating to changes to the plan of action. World Vision would receive reporting from the PMB on monthly activities. The Team was informed that one PMC staff member still in-charge of project HIV activities, continuing from the project, spends about 30 per cent of their time on monitoring and reporting to the PMB.

It was difficult to assess the quality of the information supplied by the PMB to World Vision due to difficulties in their relationship. However, talking to the PLWA, it was evident that regular meetings occur, which may provide opportunities for project outreach workers to gain feedback from the PMB.

A8.3 Sustainability of project outcomes

The Team felt that this project had a moderate possibility of being sustainable. The project’s use of local government agencies such as the PMC and DOE and the establishment of networks through mass organisations such as the Women’s Union and

Youth Union was commendable. The project was also effective in building its activities on the Government’s National AIDS strategy increasing the likelihood of expansion and sustainability of project activities.

Indeed, since project completion the PMC has continued to pay the allowances of peer educators and site collaborators, although at a lower rate than during the project. The Team was advised that peer educators now receive a monthly allowance of 150 000 VND (compared with \$US30 per month during the project) while site collaborators now receive 50 000VND per month (compared with \$US10 per month during the project).

The project was effective in raising the awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention in the community. Outreach workers perceived attitude change amongst IDUs and CSWs, which they attribute to project activities. However, the extent to which this awareness can fully be attributed to the project is unclear given that there were other influences on community attitudes. Nevertheless, the project’s focus on the youth and other high risk groups enhances chances of sustainability.

A related issue is the effective training of PMC staff and outreach workers which is likely to underpin future project activities. The integration of appropriate information into AIDS awareness curriculum and broader AIDS activities augurs well for sustainability.

A8.4: Project lessons

- The success of the project is enhanced by good working relationship with, and greater involvement of, local partners and the community in establishing project priorities and in implementation. Both a ‘bottom up’ community based approach as well as ‘top-down’ or supportive environment are necessary for sustained project outcomes. Mechanisms for creating an enabling environment at the national and provincial levels include institutional strengthening and capacity building.
- Effective qualitative and gender-disaggregated quantitative baseline data is essential for the effective design of HIV projects, quantitative data being key for the development of an appropriate gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Appropriate training of project staff, local partners and outreach workers is likely to facilitate the expansion of project activities. Moreover, the integration of appropriate information into AIDS awareness curriculum for school children and broader AIDS activities for those not in school improves chances of project sustainability.
- While IEC activities are important in raising HIV/AIDS awareness, they are unlikely to be particularly effective by themselves. They must include careful piloting, subsequent monitoring, evaluation, analysis and follow-up action.

APPENDIX 9: WVA NATIONAL HIGHWAY ONE - DEVELOPING COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO HIV/AIDS PROJECT

Ag.1: Project background

The National Highway One - Developing Community Responses to HIV/AIDS project was proposed following the implementation of a Women's Union (WU) income generation project for poor women who had worked as commercial sex workers (CSWs). The WU found that women were engaging in sex work at stopping places for truck drivers along National Highway One. The Provincial AIDS Committee (PAC) and the Preventative Medicine Centre (PMC) requested the project through World Vision in Vietnam. The project is being implemented by the Department of Health through PMC in partnership with WU. It covers Da Nang city and three Provinces of Quang Nam, Thua Thien Hue and Quang Tri.

The project started in 1997 and is scheduled for completion in June 2000.

AusAID's contribution to the project is \$304 000 through the NOVA program.

Ag.2: Achievement of objectives

Project design

The goal of the project is to reduce HIV transmission in Da Nang and three selected provinces and to increase acceptance and the capacity for care of those infected with HIV in the target locations.

The project purpose is to increase the capacity of truck drivers and selected communities, particularly women, to effectively respond to HIV/AIDS. The project sought to conduct research and develop a model for an appropriate HIV/AIDS Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) strategy for truck drivers and women based on the research findings. BCC models were to be implemented for truck drivers in four selected sites and among poor women in one site along National Highway One on a pilot basis and evaluated with a view to promoting them, as appropriate, for replication in Vietnam. A particular emphasis was to be placed on educating women and developing a network for the truck drivers, especially those who have already initiated high risk behaviour. There are four outputs expected from the project:

- Operational research using Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methodology conducted and appropriate BCC models developed for truck drivers and women;
- A BCC program implemented for truck drivers in selected districts along Highway One in Da Nang City and three central provinces (Quang Nam, Thien Hue and Quang Tri);

- A BCC program implemented incorporating appropriate care strategies among poor women in selected districts along Highway One in Da Nang City and three central provinces (Quang Nam, Thein Hue and Quang Tri); and
- Improved capacity of the Department of Health and Women's Union in research, management and training.

In general, the likely achievement of all project objectives is assessed as satisfactory overall. However, it has been noted that anticipated project impact - at least 50 per cent of targeted truck drivers practising safe sex behaviour consistently in risk situations and at least 50 per cent of target women able to protect themselves in risk situations - will be difficult to achieve. The actual influence of the project is difficult to assess due to other influences arising from different projects and government programs.

A9.2.1: Operational research using PLA methodology conducted and appropriate BCC models developed for truck drivers and women

The project successfully conducted participatory research among truck drivers and women and published two research reports (see Bessey 1998 and Huong et al 1998). The Team was advised that the research was conducted in four provinces. It was designed in consultation with the WU, PMC and truck drivers. Data was collected through individual interviews, focus group discussions and PLA exercises.

Based on research findings and feedback from project partners, a BCC program was developed for truck drivers and a gender sensitive BCC program was developed for women. In discussions with project staff, the Team was informed that the development of these models built on previous experience (National Aids Committee materials). In fact, the Project management Board in Thua Thien Hue Province mirrors the Provincial Aids Committee. However, the model development process appears not to have been documented for later use. The refinement of these models or the development of similar ones could benefit from the lessons learned during the model development process.

That said, project staff benefited from the research and model development activities. Some said that the project provided the opportunity to train more local partner staff in research methods. Moreover, conducting the research in four provinces resulted in building capacity of the PMC and WV in each province to conduct participatory research. Local partner staff gained a greater understanding of the local circumstances in regard to truck drivers and poor women and an opportunity for information sharing among provinces.

A9.2.2: A BCC program implemented for truck drivers in selected districts along Highway One in Da Nang City and three central provinces (Quang Nam, Thein Hue and Quang Tri)

The project successfully trained male and female peer educators and frontline social networkers to provide information and advice on HIV/AIDS issues to truck drivers. The Team was unable to visit appropriate sites to meet with truck drivers. While one trucking

company was visited, one truck driver who had been trained as a peer educator and one woman trained as a collaborator could be interviewed. These two indicated a high level of understanding of HIV/AIDS issues.

The Team was able to meet with many peer educators and frontline social networkers trained by the project. Many sources advised that there were 15 peer educators trained. These were drawn from a cross-section of drivers including bus drivers, short and long distance truck drivers and tourist drivers. The Team met with 20 frontline social networkers. These were drawn from different establishments such as petrol stations, restaurants and bars. Through discussions and role play, these workers demonstrated appropriate high understanding and awareness of HIV/AIDS issues and strategies to create potential opportunities for the transfer information. However, they also expressed a need for more training.

Social networkers understood that awareness raising is a long term process which focuses on dissemination of educational materials. These workers also stated that through asking questions they evaluated the success of their awareness raising during and at the end of conversations. From discussions, the Team gained the strong impression that these volunteers were enthusiastic and committed despite some financial costs involved.

There are certain inherent difficulties in providing materials to mobile clients such as truck drivers. However, the project was effective in developing, piloting and distributing IEC materials (although these materials were late in being developed). The Team was shown leaflets and pamphlets with information targeted specifically for truck drivers. Social networkers advised that they wanted more IEC materials for distribution. The Team was advised that videos, cassettes and key rings for truck drivers were being developed.

A9.2.3: A BCC program implemented incorporating appropriate care strategies among poor women in selected districts along Highway One in Da Nang City and three central provinces (Quang Nam, Thein Hue and Quang Tri)

The implementation of the BCC program for women is still in its early stage and the majority of activities are yet to be undertaken. The program is being piloted in the Tam Hiep commune, Quang Nam Province.

Forty women have been trained in HIV/AIDS and STDs while 20 women have been trained as peer educators to conduct education campaigns among poor women. A number of women in the Tam Hiep Commune received 4 days of training. They speak on an irregular basis to women in the community and have stated that awareness of AIDS prevention both sexual and non-sexual has been raised. They also felt it would be useful to speak at the Farmers' Association meetings because men needed to be involved in awareness raising. A number of men in Tam Hiep also raised the same issue that men should also be included in the program for it to be more effective.

Specific training activities, such as painting, coupled with IEC activities for young girls, were shown to raise women's self-esteem. Such changes in self-esteem apparently promoted women's capacity to take appropriate relationship decisions, and to pass on appropriate information about HIV and AIDS to their peers and families.

The team was shown IEC materials specifically developed for women.

However, with respect to the original objective (job training), the team felt that more appropriate participatory processes might have elicited a wide range of training opportunities, including small animal husbandry. This might have been a more appropriate approach than awarding scholarships.

A9.2.4: Improved capacity of the Department of Health and Women's Union in research, management and training

The project's new approaches have built on already existing systems and capacity, promoting synergy. As noted previously, project staff claim that the project has provided them with research skills. They also said that it has resulted in building capacity of the PMC and WV in each of the four provinces through participation in research and study tours. While this might be case, it is difficult at this stage to isolate the impact of this project from the influences of other AIDS training projects and activities of the National AIDS Council.

A9.2.5: Performance monitoring and reporting

Research to assess attitudes was an initial activity of the project. The research report informed the development of the BCC models.

Through interviews with World Vision in Vietnam project staff, the PMB, and project beneficiaries/participants, the Team was satisfied that the project had established a monitoring and reporting system from the grass roots level to the Provincial level, and upon which World Vision in Vietnam compiles reporting. In each Province, there is a dedicated site officer (attached to the PMC) who monitors and reports on activities to the PMB. To monitor activities, the site officer meets on a monthly basis with peer educators and social networkers trained by the project. Information on project progress is also obtained through monthly/bimonthly meetings between PMB staff and workers.

Where problems occur or issues are raised, PMB staff try to solve them with the peer educators or social networkers. Major problems are addressed to the PMB. World Vision in Vietnam is only involved where significant issues or problems arise. The participatory techniques employed in the project are believed to contribute to the quality of project performance.

Through interviews and role plays with peer educators and social networkers, the Team was satisfied that they were utilising skills acquired through project training. The Team was also satisfied that they were passing on appropriate information about AIDS awareness to women and others (such as truck drivers) in their communities.

A9.3: Sustainability of project outcomes

Like the Da Nang AIDS Education and Awareness project, the Team felt that this project has a moderate chance of being sustainable. It has built its activities on existing National AIDS strategy. This project also uses a local government agency (PMC) and mass organisations such as the WU. To a large extent, the working relationship between these organisations and World Vision in Vietnam appears to be good. However, the relationship with local partners in one province could be improved to facilitate more effective implementation of project activities in that location.

The project has developed its activities by establishing a network of peer educators and frontline social networkers who work on a voluntary basis thus improving chances for expansion and sustainability of project activities

Also, the integration of appropriate IEC materials on HIV/AIDS in its activities improves sustainability prospects.

A9.4: Project lessons

Project implementation

- Local acceptance and cooperation in project activities may be reduced where existing organisations or administrative structures are not used to deliver project activities. The success of the project is enhanced by involvement local partners and the community in establishing project priorities and in implementation.

Gender

- While gender sensitive materials have been produced, needs analysis should be carried out with both men and women (separately if necessary) to determine the most appropriate gender sensitive training strategies. Participatory processes are essential to ensure relevance of activities and IEC materials. Participation also encourages enthusiasm and commitment and promotes better project outcomes.

Community involvement

- When community members are willing to carry out a social service to inform and train other people, such volunteerism should be encouraged (for example, IEC information being supplied free of charge). Every assistance should be given to cover materials reproduction costs, where necessary, and for other needs such as transportation.

APPENDIX 10: EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

A10.1 Introduction

The PIA section, in conjunction with the NGO Section, is undertaking an evaluation of some of the projects AusAID funds through Australian Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The aim is to assist the NGO Section to develop a practical and realistic mechanism for assessing NGO program performance and to begin to assess development impact and sustainability of NGO activities. This will in turn assist NGOs to improve the quality of performance information reported to AusAID, thereby enabling it to report on the performance of the NGO scheme as part of the Government's move to accrual-based budgeting.

In 1996, AusAID began implementing a package of managerial reforms for NGO funding in response to recommendations from an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audit of the management of AusAID's NGO programs. The reforms included accreditation of NGOs for aid program funding, generic guidelines for NGO schemes, and the development of performance indicators to assess scheme performance.

However, the follow-up audit of NGO funding (ANAO 1998) had some concerns about the quality of the performance information being reported by NGOs. The ANAO recommended that:

- AusAID work with NGOs to improve the standard of performance information available to the NGO scheme, sufficient to assess achievements against individual activities; and
- develop performance measures, aggregating activity level information as appropriate, sufficient to assess overall NGO scheme performance and the efficiency of AusAID administration.

Preliminary investigation of the systems used by NGOs to provide performance information will assist AusAID to work with NGOs to begin to address concerns of the ANAO about the quality of the performance information reported by NGOs.

Vietnam has been chosen as the location for the evaluation because it offers a good representative spread of NGOs involved in development projects covering a wide cross-section of completed and ongoing projects in AusAID's Key Result Areas (KRAs). The NGO:Vietnam/Australia Program (NOVA) was the first country window to trial the new NGO scheme guidelines. Moreover, NGO activities are likely to increase in the South East Asian region in response to the Asian financial situation. The lessons learned in Vietnam may be usefully applied to activities in other countries in the region.

The evaluation will look at a cluster of projects in KRAs. It will assess their impact and the sustainability of development outcomes in order to see what lessons can be learned that could improve the performance of future projects, including performance reporting. The cluster evaluation approach will make the assessment more cost-effective.

A10.2 Evaluation objectives

The evaluation has the following objectives:

- to assess the effectiveness of AusAID-funded NGO projects in achieving their stated objectives and the sustainability of outcomes;
- to contribute to AusAID's understanding of the capacity and systems NGOs use to obtain and compile reliable performance information in monitoring reports. This will involve:
- a preliminary assessment of the use of the NGO self-rating system as a measure of activity and program performance
- to begin to assess the utility and appropriateness of using an activity management system, drawing on AusAID's recently revised Activity Monitoring Brief, to identify NGO activity reporting and collection of performance information;
- to contribute to the development of a NGO review/evaluation strategy for accreditation and review purposes; and
- to provide comment on program delivery aspects and roles of NGOs in Vietnam.

Lessons drawn from project experience will provide input to the NGO Policy Statement, NGO Package of Information revision and the planned Vietnam Country Effectiveness Review. Furthermore, the NGO community, through the Committee for Development Cooperation (CDC) and other forums, will be informed of the outcomes of the evaluation so that lessons learned can be utilised to improve more widely program performance and reporting.

A10.3 Scope of the evaluation

In order to produce relevant information for the above mentioned objectives, the evaluation will address (but not necessarily be limited to) the following main issues:

- (a) Project design and objectives. In particular:
- (i) what were the objectives of the project, including any changes during the course of the project, and what were its expected benefits and impact?
- are these objectives consistent with the perceived needs of the intended beneficiaries and do they fit the expectations of the beneficiaries regarding the project?
 - what role did intended beneficiaries play in the setting of objectives, design and implementation of the project?
 - to what extent did the project generally support the overall development efforts and priorities of the recipient country?

- (ii) to what extent have these objectives and benefits been attained or are likely to be achieved?
- (iii) what are the major factors influencing the achievement or lack of achievement of the above?
- (b) Development outcomes/impact of the projects, both intended and unintended. Key issues include:
- in what ways have the conditions of the intended beneficiaries been changed during and since project implementation?
 - to what extent can it be determined whether these changes have been due to the impact of the project or to the influence of other non-project factors?
 - how have project benefits been distributed between different groups of people (eg rich/poor, men/women, landed/landless, different social groups)?
 - to what extent has the project had wider effects - either positive or negative - that extend beyond the project boundaries?
 - what are the major factors contributing to the project's impact, or lack of impact?
 - do the projects alleviate poverty in a direct and tangible way?
- (c) Attention to cross-cutting issues of gender and environment in project design and implementation.
- (d) Efficiency in the way the project was executed. For example:
- have the overall costs been appropriate to the range, level and distribution of benefits?
 - has the project used the least costly resources necessary to achieve its objectives, or could more have been achieved for the resources expended?
- (e) Sustainability of project outcomes:
- have the institutional arrangements for project implementation strengthened or hampered the possibilities of sustained project activities? Has the management capacity of the targeted organisations been strengthened?
 - are the activities promoted by the project economically and financially viable? Can they be maintained within the resources available to the community?
 - does the project have the necessary support from beneficiaries, for example, in the form of active participation in operation of facilities and use of services?
 - has appropriate technology been used?
- (f) Adequacy of project planning, appraisal, monitoring and performance reporting by NGO agencies, including the nature, availability and use of baseline data.
- (g) Identification of systems and methods used by NGOs to compile reliable monitoring reports to meet AusAID's new NGO scheme guidelines.

A10.4 Evaluation methodology

To carry out the evaluation work within the specified time frame and achieve the evaluation objectives, the following methodology is proposed:

- A database will be compiled of all Australian NGO projects in Vietnam since the early 1990s and grouped in the key result areas of agriculture and rural development, health, education and community development. (The evaluation will not consider emergency relief and volunteer projects as these have quite different objectives to development projects, and so require different assessment criteria).
- A sample of about 10 to 12 projects will be selected from the database for detailed field assessment in consultation with the NGO Section, Vietnam Desk and AusAID Posts in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The selected projects will be representative of NGO agencies, project size, sector of operations, location within Vietnam and type of AusAID funding (ANCP and NGO Windows).
- A review of available project documents (including project reports and revisions, annual plans, grant agreement, existing evaluation material by NGOs, organisation reviews etc.) will be undertaken during the desk study to prepare an issues paper that will form the basis for the field study. The aim of the issues paper is to help focus the evaluation on aspects of project design, objectives, implementation and later impact, that may help to explain performance and guide future project performance.
- Discussions will be held with relevant NGOs to obtain their views on AusAID's reporting requirements and the performance and impact of the projects.
- AusAID Posts' views will be sought in relation to the effectiveness of NGO cooperation activities in Vietnam.
- Field assessment will be undertaken to obtain the views of local staff and project beneficiaries (both community and government) on the performance of projects and their impact. Due attention will be given to views of disadvantaged groups such as women, poorer community members and minority groups. Discussions will also be held with representatives of other donor agencies. The evaluation team will strive to obtain quantitative data on outcomes and impacts wherever possible. However, in practice the team might find it difficult to access relevant performance data in the time available. Thus, the team will supplement available data with qualitative information from field discussions and informed personal judgements.

- The team will analyse the gathered information and prepare the evaluation report covering the elements outlined in the scope of the evaluation (see section 3) as well as any other points deemed important and relevant by the evaluators.

A10.5 Evaluation Team

The broad scope of the evaluation, and the diversity of NGO projects in Vietnam, necessitate an evaluation team with a diverse range of skills and experience. The team will consist of:

- **A Team Leader and Task Manager (Mr. Deo Mwesigye) from the PIA Section of AusAID.**

Mr Mwesigye has a background in economics and expertise in project and program evaluation across a range of sectors. He is familiar with AusAID requirements for evaluation and reviews, and has proven report writing skills. As Team Leader and Task Manager, Mr Mwesigye will be responsible for the overall conduct of the evaluation, including allocation of team responsibilities. He will coordinate and oversee the work of consultants and will ensure that the contents of the final evaluation report, including conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned meet AusAID requirements.

- **A team member (Mr Greg MacPherson) from the NGO Section of AusAID.**

Mr MacPherson has a background in anthropology and social analysis, and competence in report writing. He has a detailed knowledge of AusAID's NGO programs, and currently administers AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program grants.

Mr MacPherson is developing a performance information and evaluation strategy for AusAID's NGO program.

- **One Australian short term consultant.**

The Australian consultant will have high level skills and experience in the following areas:

- Advanced expertise and extensive experience in planning and evaluation of aid-funded NGO development projects including community-based projects. This should include experience in the design, appraisal and monitoring of aid projects for AusAID;
- Experience in economic and financial analysis of projects including outcomes at household level;
- Expertise in designing and undertaking local level surveys, including collecting and collating relevant information on project performance within a short time frame and to a high standard;
- Proven leadership skills, together with strong interpersonal, representation and negotiation skills, including in the context of small evaluation teams.

Proven ability to work in a collegiate manner with NGOs, recipient government officials, villagers and aid administrators;

- Familiarity with AusAID's current procedures, approaches and policies; and
- Demonstrated experience in writing reports of high standard and in meeting deadlines set by clients;
- Knowledge of Vietnam's development objectives and priorities is desirable.
- **One Vietnamese short term consultant.**

The Vietnamese consultant will have high level skills and experience in the following areas:

- Familiarity with NGOs and NGO projects in Vietnam, including local NGOs, and an understanding of the Government of Vietnam's (GOV) development objectives;
- Experience in assessing community development and social aspects of project outcomes, including institutional and gender impact;
- Expertise in conducting interviews with project beneficiaries, NGOs, local and high level government officials;
- Good command of spoken Vietnamese and English and experience in providing interpreting and translation services for team members; and
- Good writing skills.
- **Resource persons**

A request will be made to participating NGOs to provide the team with resource persons and/or interpreters, particularly for interviews with target beneficiaries.

A representative from a GOV agency, PACCOM, will be included on the team to facilitate/coordinate the team's field work activities with national and local government officials and community groups.

The AusAID Post will be requested to provide an officer to support and coordinate the conduct of the evaluation in the field, including:

- advising the team on program delivery aspects and roles of NGOs in Vietnam;
- project selection;
- coordinating the selection of a Vietnamese consultant;
- organising the team schedule of meetings and field visits with government and NGO officials; and
- coordinating arrangements for accommodation and in-country travel.

• **Advisory Group**

An advisory group will be formed to assist the evaluation. This will consist of officers from the NGO Section, Vietnam Desk, PIA Section and Rural Development Group. The Committee for Development Cooperation (CDC) will be invited to nominate a member to the advisory group.

Individual scope of services will be formulated when the consultants have been selected. Detailed review tasks will be developed in the workplan prior to field work.

A10.6 Work plan

A key task of the AusAID team members (Deo Mwesigye and Greg MacPherson) will be to prepare a comprehensive workplan prior to in-country work in Vietnam. This plan will confirm the scope of the evaluation in regard to areas of focus and principle issues, and proceed to detail project related questions relevant to issues, indicators to be utilised and the means of verification to be employed. While being project oriented, the assessments will focus on the key sectors of AusAID involvement in NGO projects in Vietnam such as agriculture, rural development, health, education and community development.

A field mission involving all team members will begin about 19 April 1999 for four weeks. During this time, the team will undertake detailed assessment of projects. A draft report will be prepared, to the fullest extent possible, prior to departure from Vietnam. The team will prepare an Aide Memoire for discussion with People's Aid Coordination Committee (PACCOM), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) and relevant NGOs, before departure from Vietnam. Because of limited support facilities in the field, the Australian consultant and AusAID team members will finalise the draft report in Australia for comment by the advisory group members and the CDC. On receipt of comments, Australian consultant and AusAID team members will revise the draft report into a final report for publication.

A10.7 Reporting

The report will consist of evaluation findings, supplemented with any essential appendices. Emphasis will be on lessons learned and how NGOs can better assess and report on project performance. The AusAID ex-post evaluation report format will be used as a framework. After consideration by AusAID Program Quality Committee, it is proposed that the final report will be published in a hard copy either in full or as an abridged version. It is also proposed that the report will be made available on the AusAID Intranet on the AusAID website. In addition, a flier will be produced summarising the findings.

APPENDIX 11:PROJECT ASSESSMENT FORM

Please rate the following elements based on your experience of the Evaluation of individual NGO projects.

Ratings: 5 = Best practice; 4 = Fully satisfactory; 3 = Satisfactory overall; 2 = Marginally satisfactory; 1 = Weak.

A. Project has appropriate objectives and design		
Quality standard	Rating	Comments
<p>Indicator 1: Appropriateness of objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives measurable, clear and realistic. • Intended outputs clearly described and appropriate. • Beneficiaries' needs reflected in objectives. • Objectives consistent with the country's development policies • Objectives take account of other activities including ongoing activities of AusAID, other donors and partner country. <p>Overall score for indicator 1</p>		
<p>Indicator 2: Partner country participation in design process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory planning approaches used • Partner government officials and staff appropriately involved at all stages in design development. • Ultimate beneficiaries contributed to development of the design. <p>Overall score for indicator 2</p>		

B. Project achieves its objectives		
Quality standard	Rating	Comments
<p>Indicator 3: Progress in achieving objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Realistic overall assessment indicates that the project has or is likely to achieve its objectives. <p>Overall score for indicator 3</p>		
<p>Indicator 4: Extent of benefits to target population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The project has made (or is likely to make) a positive impact on the lives of intended beneficiaries. •Beneficiaries are likely or able to describe benefits received. <p>Overall score for indicator 4</p>		
<p>Indicator 5: Poverty alleviation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The project contributed to poverty alleviation in a direct and tangible way. <p>Overall score for indicator 5</p>		
<p>Indicator 6: WID/GAD issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Strategies incorporated to address WID/GAD issues in the planning and implementation of the project. •Efforts were made to involve women in project activities. •The project had a positive impact on women <p>Overall score for indicator 6</p>		
<p>Indicator 7: Project management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The project worked with existing local structures. •The project was mainly implemented by local organisations. <p>Overall score for indicator 7</p>		

C. Project has sustainable outcomes		
Quality standard	Rating	Comments
<p>Indicator 8: Sustainability strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Project design/implementation developed a strategy to ensure sustainability of project benefits. <p>OVERALL SCORE FOR INDICATOR 8.....</p>		
<p>Indicator 9: Sustainability of grassroots benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Local implementing partner clearly identified and involved in project design and implementation. •Community or beneficiary group closely involved in developing project design and implementation and likely to participate actively in post-project activities •Community or beneficiary group likely to have sufficient improved knowledge, skills and resources to manage the project's system of benefits for themselves after project completion. •Activities/outputs promoted by the project likely to be maintained within the resources (financial and in kind) available to the community. <p>OVERALL SCORE FOR INDICATOR 9.....</p>		
<p>Indicator 10: Institutional sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Institutional arrangements for project implementation likely to strengthen the possibility of sustained project activities. •Project training programs likely to provide adequate and appropriate technical skills to maintain project benefits after the project ends •Project includes training for partner government officials and staff in how to manage activities with reduced resources after project finishes. <p>OVERALL SCORE FOR INDICATOR 10.....</p>		

D. Performance monitoring and reporting		
Quality standard	Rating	Comments
<p>Indicator 11: Performance monitoring and reporting strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate data gathered and used as a basis for assessing project performance. • Appropriate monitoring systems are in place to capture information upon which to assess project performance. • Use of participatory approaches to collection, dissemination and sharing of information. <p>OVERALL SCORE FOR INDICATOR 11</p>		

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